

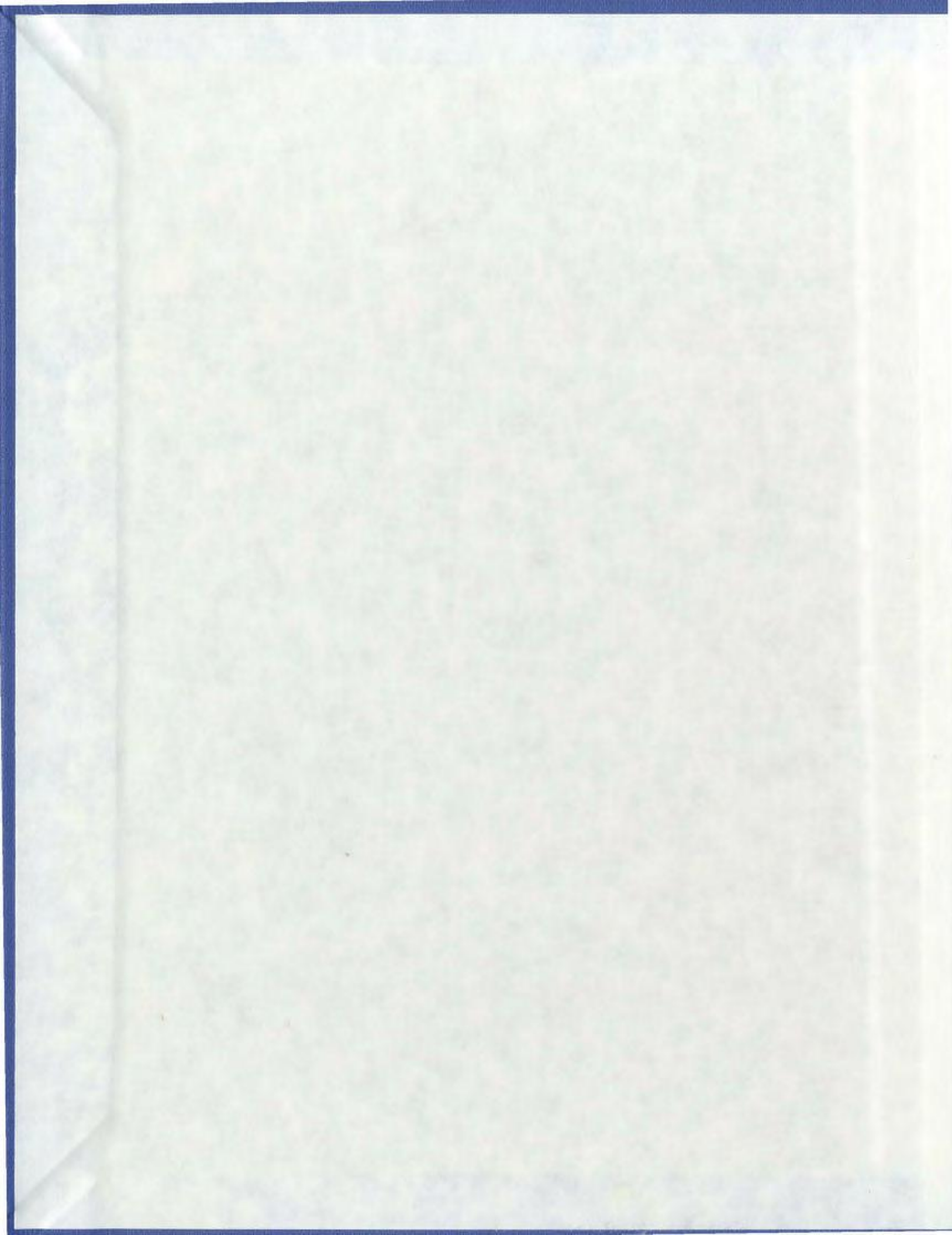
SORCERY BELIEFS AND ORAL TRADITION  
IN CHETICAMP, CAPE BRETON

CENTRE FOR NEWFOUNDLAND STUDIES

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SORCERY BELIEFS AND ORAL TRADITION

IN

CHETICAMP, CAPE BRETON

by



Elizabeth Catherine Beaton Planetta

A Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of  
Master of Arts

Department of Folklore

Memorial University of Newfoundland

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Newfoundland

# ABSTRACT

During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in the Chéticamp area of Cape Breton, Nova Scotia, events took place which were considered to be the machinations of certain persons who were known to be sorciers. The people of Chéticamp reacted to these happenings by performing rituals which were believed to deliver the victim from the sorcery. Although sorcery is no longer practised in the community of Chéticamp, the tradition of belief in such practices lives on in contemporary oral tradition.

An analysis of primary and secondary historical accounts in conjunction with such oral traditions of Chéticamp reveals narratives concerning sorcery, and esoteric and exoteric views and values of the community. These in turn suggest reasons for the activation of the sorcery beliefs during the period under consideration, and indicate the present state of these beliefs.

The period from the 1870's to the 1930's witnessed changes in the traditional livelihood, family, religion, and language of Chéticamp. This thesis hypothesizes that anxiety generated over these changes which threatened the values of the community, caused a belief in "sorcerie" to function as a means of social control.

#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First I wish to thank my husband Bob, and my daughters, Tasseey and Samantha, for their patience and understanding during the writing of this thesis. Along with dishwashing, cooking and baby-sitting, my husband also contributed suggestions, artistic sketches, and proof-reading to the effort.

I am indebted to the Beaton Institute of Cape Breton Studies which financed most of the research for this thesis, and provided space for its writing. For suggestions, practical assistance, and constant encouragement I thank the Director of the Beaton Institute, Robert Morgan, and each member of the Institute staff -- Hilda Day, Kay MacDonald, Doug MacPhee and Yvonne Campbell. This work owes much to those who generously supplied information related to the research: Bernie LeVeit, Sr. Catherine Jolicoeur, Ronald Labelle, Lauraine Léger, Rev. Dan Doucette, Rev. Conrad Gerrior, and Edward D. Ives.

For valuable suggestions in the writing of this thesis I thank David Frank, also Laurent LaVoie, Herbert Halpert, Rev. Robert Neville, Cindy Lamson, Jerry Pocius, and Hubert Spekkens.

Many thanks are due Heather and Jerry Pocius for their hospitality and accommodation during Newfoundland's February. And to Elaine Nardocchio for finishing the typing before rushing off to have a baby.

Finally, I wish to express my appreciation to my supervisor, Peter Narvaéz, and to the Dean of Graduate Studies at Memorial University of Newfoundland, F.A. Aldrich.

In the hope that I was able to present a true picture of their life and community, I would like to dedicate this work to the people of Cheticamp.



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## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

The Acadians of Cheticamp<sup>1</sup> believe that, during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, sorcery was practised in their community. Cheticamp is a fishing community of 4,000 people located on the northwestern coast of Cape Breton, Nova Scotia. The people of Cheticamp are mainly descendants of the French-speaking inhabitants of the now Maritime Provinces who were expelled by the British authorities in 1755. They are basically Francophone although English has been spoken in the community since the turn of the century.

An analysis of the contemporary oral traditions of Cheticamp suggests a basis for sorcery beliefs which were held in that community during the period under consideration. Oral and documented sources reveal that, from the 1870's to the 1930's in Cheticamp, several factors contributed to a situation in which the traditional values and ideals of the community were threatened. It will be hypothesized that the anxiety produced by this threat to the traditional way of Cheticamp life resulted in the activation of long-standing sorcery beliefs in the community. The types of sorcery practised and the backgrounds of the people who practised sorcery are related in narratives by the Chéticantins. These narratives help to create an image of the past situation and to furnish evidence about the present levels of this belief in the community.

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<sup>1</sup>Placename spellings will be as found in Gazetteer of Canada: Nova Scotia Nouvelle-Ecosse (Ottawa: Dept. of Energy, Mines and Resources, 1977).

Examples and narratives of sorcery in Acadian and French Canadian communities in Canada are found in collections by Helen Creighton in Bluenose Magic,<sup>2</sup> Richard Dorson in Bloodstoppers and Bearwalkers,<sup>3</sup> and Paul A. W. Wallace in Baptiste Larocque: Legends of French Canada.<sup>4</sup> Anselme Chiasson,<sup>5</sup> Robert-Lionel Séguin,<sup>6</sup> and Lauraine Léger<sup>7</sup> have provided some sociological and historical background to the examples of sorcery found in the geographical areas of their studies. These works also suggest reasons for the people's belief in sorcery.

Sorcery is found in fictitious form in at least one nineteenth century contribution to Canadian literature. Philippe Aubert de Gaspé used the theme of sorcery as part of his historical novel Les Anciens Canadiens,<sup>8</sup> indicating

<sup>2</sup> Bluenose Magic (Toronto: Ryerson, 1957).

<sup>3</sup> Bloodstoppers and Bearwalkers (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1952), pp. 71-86.

<sup>4</sup> Baptiste Larocque: Legends of French Canada (Toronto: Musson Book Company, 1923), pp. 42-51.

<sup>5</sup> Les Légendes des Îles de la Madeleine (Moncton: Editions des Aboiteaux, 1976), and Chéticamp: Histoire et Traditions acadiennes (Moncton: Editions des Aboiteaux, 1961).

<sup>6</sup> La Sorcellerie au Québec du XVIIe au XIXe Siècles (Ottawa: Leméac, 1971).

<sup>7</sup> Les Sanctions Populaires en Acadie: Région du Comté de Kent (Ottawa: Leméac, 1978).

<sup>8</sup> Les Anciens Canadiens, Québec: Desbarats & Derbshire, 1863; 2nd ed., Québec: C. & C.E. Desbarats, 1864 (rev. ed.). Rpt. of the second ed., Montreal: Fides, 1975 (Bibliothèque Canadienne-Française).



3.  
that legends about sorcery were part of the Québec oral tradition in the nineteenth century.

Much of the field work and other research connected with this study of sorcery beliefs in Chéticamp was done under the auspices of the Beaton Institute of Cape Breton Studies, College of Cape Breton, as part of my employment since May 1, 1978. As a researcher I was required to collect Acadian folk culture material from the Chéticamp area of Cape Breton. In the process of collecting material, nine fieldtrips were made to the Chéticamp area between June 1978 and May 1979. Initially, these were not only for the collection of sorcery beliefs and legends, but for descriptions of community customs, and for the collection of Acadian songs, which were requested by the Beaton Institute for their Archive collection. This allowed a broader view of the community than would have been obtained in collecting beliefs alone. Altogether, twenty-six tapes were collected, twenty-five of which included material on sorcery beliefs. These are stored at the Beaton Institute, and shelf list numbers are given in footnotes as transcriptions occur in this thesis.<sup>9</sup> Both direct and indirect quotations from taped conversations

<sup>9</sup> Example of original tape reference: 00 Henrietta Aucoin, Beaton Institute, tape, 1177. Subsequent tape references will be given thus: the name of the informant and the shelf list number, for example, 00 Henrietta Aucoin, 1177. If the informant's name has already been given in the text, only the shelf list number will be given, for example, 00 1177.

are given in this thesis for which the transcription procedure is that recommended by E.D. Ives in A Manual for Fieldworkers.<sup>10</sup> All of the taped material on sorcery collected by myself is in the English language, except for one narrative and an occasional phrase. The difficulty in transcribing the narrative in Acadian dialect made it necessary to have it translated into English. Primary material given in Acadian dialect, from other sources such as the Centre d'études acadiennes, Moncton, is translated in the text of the thesis.

In order to show a universal comparison of the themes found in the sorcery narratives of Chéticamp, a list of motifs analogous to those found in Stith Thompson's Motif-Index of Folk-Literature<sup>11</sup> is given in Appendix B. As well, references will be made to W.D. Hand's classification of Popular Beliefs and Superstitions<sup>12</sup> as analogous motifs occur in the text.

The selection of informants was done almost entirely by referral. The first two people, Alfred LeBlanc, native of Chéticamp, and Jacques Pleau, former resident of

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<sup>10</sup>Published as No. 15 of Northeast Folklore (Orono, Maine: University Press, 1974).

<sup>11</sup>Motif-Index of Folk-Literature 6 vols., rev. and enl. ed. (1955-1958; 3rd printing, Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1975).

<sup>12</sup>The Frank C. Brown Collection of North Carolina Folklore, vols. 6 and 7, ed. W.D. Hand (Durham: Duke University Press, 1964). This source is recognized as a systematic reference for folk beliefs and superstitions in North America.

Chéticamp working for Parks Canada, were recommended by Dr. Robert Morgan, Director of the Beaton Institute.

These two informants helped to initiate the research by giving their views of the community, and by suggesting informants who would be willing to give examples of the community's traditional culture. Following this, it was quite impossible to interview all the recommended informants. My selection of these, totally amounting to thirty-two, was based partly upon the information given about them, and partly upon convenience in reaching them.

Most of the informants ranged in age from forty to eighty-three years and were not of an academic or professional association. It was from these seventeen people that the majority of the sorcery beliefs and the narratives surrounding them were collected. For the most part, they were unselfconscious and subjective in their descriptions. However, if on occasion they pondered upon the validity of their beliefs, they almost always concluded that the evidence verified what they believed.

In most cases, the collector interviewed one informant at a time. Perhaps the most noteworthy of these was Marie Deveau of Belle-Marche, Chéticamp. During the months of research, lengthy discussions were held with her over cups of tea. Her hospitality along with her generosity in supplying information was often and greatly appreciated.

In certain situations, discussions between two or more members of the community were encouraged. This tended to ~~pro~~ memories and to expose emotions and to reduce the significance of a stranger with a tape recorder.

In these cases, I played the role of "inactive participant".<sup>13</sup>

Family discussions took place in the households of Henrietta Aucoin in Petit Etang, and of Patrick Aucoin in St. Joseph du Moine. Similar discussions occurred in the home of John Joseph Deveaux in Sydney. Natives of Chéticamp who have lived in Sydney for the past nineteen years, the Deveaux family were frequent consultants in my sorcery research. Information received from them made possible clarification and co-ordination of material received from other sources. Their interest and encouragement was very gratifying.

In other cases, one member of the family was formally interviewed while one or more family members remained in the background and made a limited contribution or served as a silent audience. This situation occurred in the interview with Ulysses LeLièvre, Chéticamp Village, and with Arthur Bourgeois of Belle-Marche.

The involvement of young people, aged seven to twenty-five, was mainly as audience to the narrative.

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<sup>13</sup> K.S. Goldstein, Guide for Fieldworkers in Folklore, published for American Folklore Society (Hathboro, Pa., Folklore Associates, 1964), pp. 78-80. An "inactive participant" refers to an interviewer who becomes part of the audience of a usually informal performance.



performances of their older relatives. In one instance, however, a narrative was collected from a twenty-three year old student.

In gathering information about the sorcerers, relatives of those involved in the practise offered a personal, family view. Bert LeBoutillier, a Jersey-Huguenot descendant, is the grandson of a person believed to have delivered people from sorcery. Possessing great pride in his ancestry, Bert LeBoutillier generously contributed family information from his Bible and from papers of the Robin-Jones Company operating in Chéticamp. Joseph A. "à Goduk"<sup>13a</sup> Deveaux, a native of Chéticamp who has lived in New Waterford for many years, was outspoken about his grand-uncle Gabriel, who was well-known for his sorcery. It is possible that distance from his native community afforded him a certain freedom of speech in speaking of his family.

Early in the research, a meeting was arranged with Father Desjardins, the parish priest of Chéticamp, who is a native of New Brunswick. An attempt was made, at that time, to evaluate the clergy's relationship to the community, and to lay the basis for further requests for information, while diplomatically establishing the presence of a researcher in the predominantly Catholic community.

As a result of visiting Father Desjardins, an

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<sup>13a</sup> Nickname: to be explained on p. 58.

opportunity was given to meet Père Anselme Chiasson, author of Chéticamp: Histoire et Traditions acadiennes, a well-known publication which had been used in preparation for the research. Now in semi-retirement, Anselme Chiasson has, for many years, made a significant contribution to the Centre d'études acadiennes at Moncton, New Brunswick. His work has included research in the Magdalen Islands as well as Chéticamp. He continues to visit his home community of Chéticamp and his love and knowledge of the area must have been significant factors in his devoted research. The meeting with Père Anselme included a discussion of the beliefs and songs of the area and his methods of collecting them. In Chéticamp: Histoire et Traditions acadiennes, Chiasson suggests that a shortage of priests in a naturally credulous community accounted, at least in part, for the belief in sorcery.<sup>14</sup>

Father Charles Aucoin, Director of Les Trois Pignons, a centre for Acadian culture in Chéticamp, was also introduced to me by Father Desjardins. Since then, Father Aucoin has been consulted on many occasions, both in person and by telephone. Without exception, he has been most helpful in providing both documented and traditional information. Father Aucoin felt that the

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<sup>14</sup>Chéticamp, p. 258.

inherent superstitious nature of the Acadians led them to believe in sorcery. In this regard, he referred to the Acadians' fear of the dark, and the belief in ghosts and the lutins.<sup>15</sup>

Two retired medical doctors, each having completed forty years of practise in and outside of Cheticamp, attempted to give an "objective" medical view on aspects of Cheticamp sorcery beliefs that affected physical and mental health. In doing this, Dr. Boudreau and Dr. Cormier were faced with relating scientific medical knowledge to traditional belief and practise. Being natives of Cheticamp, both men had heard "stories" about sorcery, but had effectively managed to separate their significance from their professional lives. To their knowledge, neither had treated any sorcery-connected illnesses, and only Dr. Boudreau admitted the possibility of such illness in Cheticamp.<sup>16</sup> Dr. Cormier felt that illness due to sorcery was a possibility in African tribal communities but not in Cheticamp.<sup>17</sup> Both blamed the acceptance of a belief in sorcery on a "lack of spiritualism", that is, lack of belief in God and in the Catholic Church.<sup>18</sup> The opinions of the clergy and the doctors appeared to reflect their

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<sup>15</sup> Beaton Institute, tape, 1178

<sup>16</sup> Beaton Institute, tape, 1178

<sup>17</sup> Beaton Institute, tape, 1178

<sup>18</sup> Dr. Boudreau, 1178; Dr. Cormier, 1178. (Dr. Boudreau and Dr. Cormier were interviewed separately.)

views of their roles in the community.

Other persons in academic positions were consulted for purposes of discussing features of the community and its ideals. Ray LeFort and Bernie LeVert, both in teaching positions away from their native community of Chéticamp, were asked to give their opinions which, in fact, tested conclusions drawn from my field experience. Professor LeVert also assisted in translating French reference sources and transcriptions of Acadian dialect in which there may have been semantic ambiguity.

In order to provide a comparison of Chéticamp with the other major Acadian community in Cape Breton, a field trip was taken to Isle Madame, on the southwestern side of Cape Breton Island, about 100 miles from Chéticamp. A limited survey of cultural traits helped to expose some of the past and present conditions in the community. Interviews with Lennox Mauger and Marshall Bourinot, both of Jersey descent, revealed the esoteric-exoteric attitudes of the Acadians and the Jersey-Huguenots who make up most of the population of Isle Madame.

Father Conrad Gerrior, a native of West Arichat, Isle Madame, supplied valuable information about the beliefs and customs of the area. Father Dan Doucette, pastor of Petit-de-Grat, Isle Madame, and a native of Margaree (near Chéticamp), was able to draw, from thirteen years observation, a well-defined cultural comparison between the two Acadian communities. This information, admittedly



from elite sources, revealed the absence of sorcery beliefs as they are found in Chéticamp. A collection by Lois Samson of "old folk stories" on Isle Madame from twenty informants, mainly fishermen and their wives, also failed to turn up stories about sorcery, although other superstitions were mentioned.<sup>19</sup>

Sr. Catherine Jolicoeur, of Centre Universitaire d'Edmunston, New Brunswick, very kindly outlined her understanding of the sorcery beliefs of Acadians in New Brunswick. This was done through correspondence dated August 1978. Also, through correspondence, Ronald Labelle of Centre d'études acadiennes, summarized his observations about Acadian sorcery beliefs in the Maritime provinces. He noted that there was a greater variety of sorcery beliefs in the Chéticamp area than in other Maritime Acadian areas.<sup>20</sup>

Most of the documented history of the Chéticamp area, and primary documents such as censuses, which had relevance to the total historical context of Cape Breton were obtainable at the library of the Beaton Institute of Cape Breton Studies.

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<sup>19</sup> The collection by Lois Samson was done during the summer of 1979 as part of Project Participation Jeunesse under the direction of the Acadian Federation of Nova Scotia. The recorded material and transcriptions are available at the Beaton Institute, tape, 1180.

<sup>20</sup> Correspondence dated January 21, 1980.

The most obvious practical difficulty in collecting primary source material was distance. The 110 miles between Sydney (home of the author), and Cheticamp made continuous contact with the community impossible.

Instead, one-day or overnight fieldtrips necessitated three or four intensive interviews per day. Because of this factor, confidence and friendship with informants was built up rather slowly. It is perhaps significant, in this regard, that information dealing with the sexual indiscretions of some of the men accused of sorcery was not revealed until the last planned fieldtrip--in November 1978. This revelation, discussed in following chapters, was provided by Father Charles Aucoin, with whom many previous discussions had been held. It seemed that a certain time had to pass before such intimate community knowledge could be shared with an outsider. In my opinion, my position as an outsider, rather than my role as a woman, was the major inhibiting factor in collecting material such as this.

The nature of some information, such as that mentioned above, presented the problem of restricting sensitive material. A general policy of not disclosing previously collected information to informants was exercised. Thus, verification or discussion of certain topics had to be patiently waited upon.

Another possible drawback in the gathering of source

material, and in the understanding of the community of Chéticamp, was the language difference. Although all informants showed the greatest tolerance for the unilingual conversational ability of the author, they almost always opened the first conversation with "Do you speak French"? It is possible that speaking in their second language, English, about their traditional beliefs may have obscured certain implications which might have been expressed more clearly in the Acadian dialect.

It will be noted, however, that informants frequently used standard French and Acadian dialect words along with English. They referred to the practise of sorcery with the following words: sorcery, sorcellerie, "sorcerie", "sorcellage", or witchcraft. Accordingly, a practitioner of sorcery was called a sorcerer, sorcier or sorcière, or witch. The victim of sorcery was known to be "ensorcelé". In this thesis, standard French words will be underlined, and Acadian dialect will be underlined and within inverted commas. All Acadian dialect words in this thesis were used by informants, and the spellings of certain words, including "Jersais" (Jersiais) and "subourchais" (sobriquet) were provided by informants.

Throughout this research, I was impressed with the hospitality of the Chéticamp people toward an outsider who delved into the personal history and ways of their community. The openness and generosity with which they gave their abundant lore about sorcery made the research an exciting and fulfilling experience.

A consideration of the history and geography of Chéticamp reflects social and economic factors which contributed to the practise of sorcery. Fieldwork observations along with oral and documented historical sources indicate past and present community ideals directly related to such social and economic factors.

### Geography

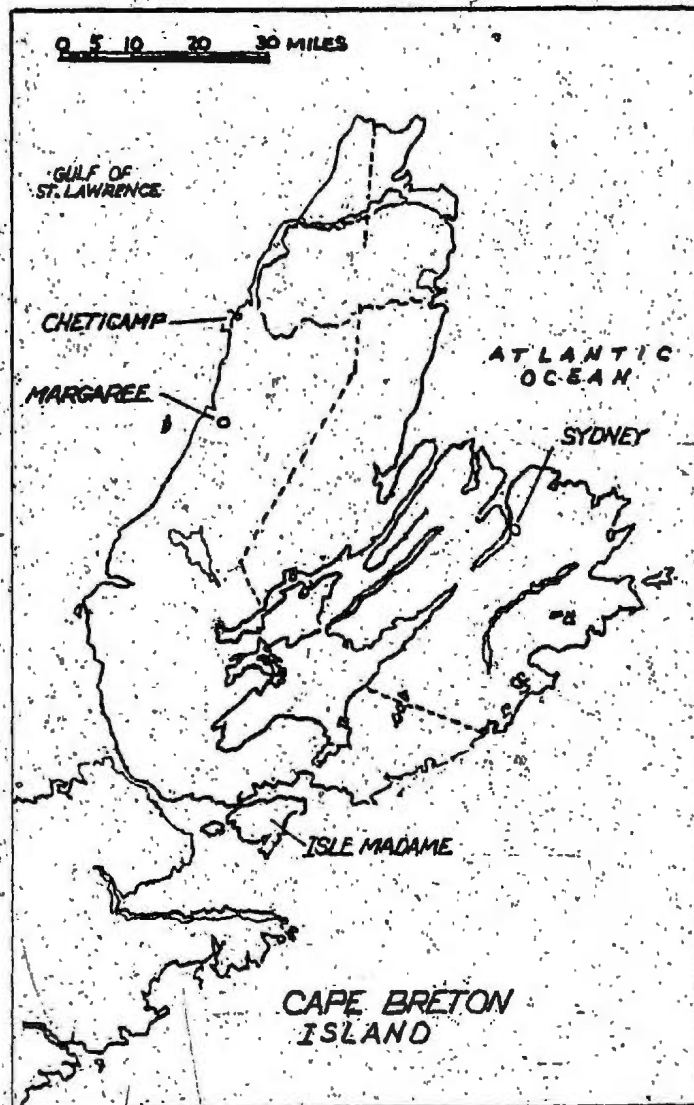
The geographical area referred to in this thesis is located in northern Inverness County, on the north-western coast of Cape Breton Island, Nova Scotia (see maps). Chéticamp, a Gallicisation of the Micmac "Chadye" meaning "thick woods" or "rarely full",<sup>1</sup> will refer to an area of coastline starting at Belle Côte on the northern side of Margaree Harbour and extending northward. There are a number of contiguous areas which are generally thought of as "Chéticamp". Covering a ten-mile stretch of coastline, south to north, these are Terre Noire, Cap le Moine, St. Joseph du Moine, Grand Etang, Point Cross, Plateau, Red Man, the Island, La Prairie, Chéticamp Village, Belle-Marche, and Petit Etang.

Between The Island and Chéticamp Village is a protected summer harbour. Petit Etang marks the end of Chéticamp and the entrance to the Cape Breton Highlands

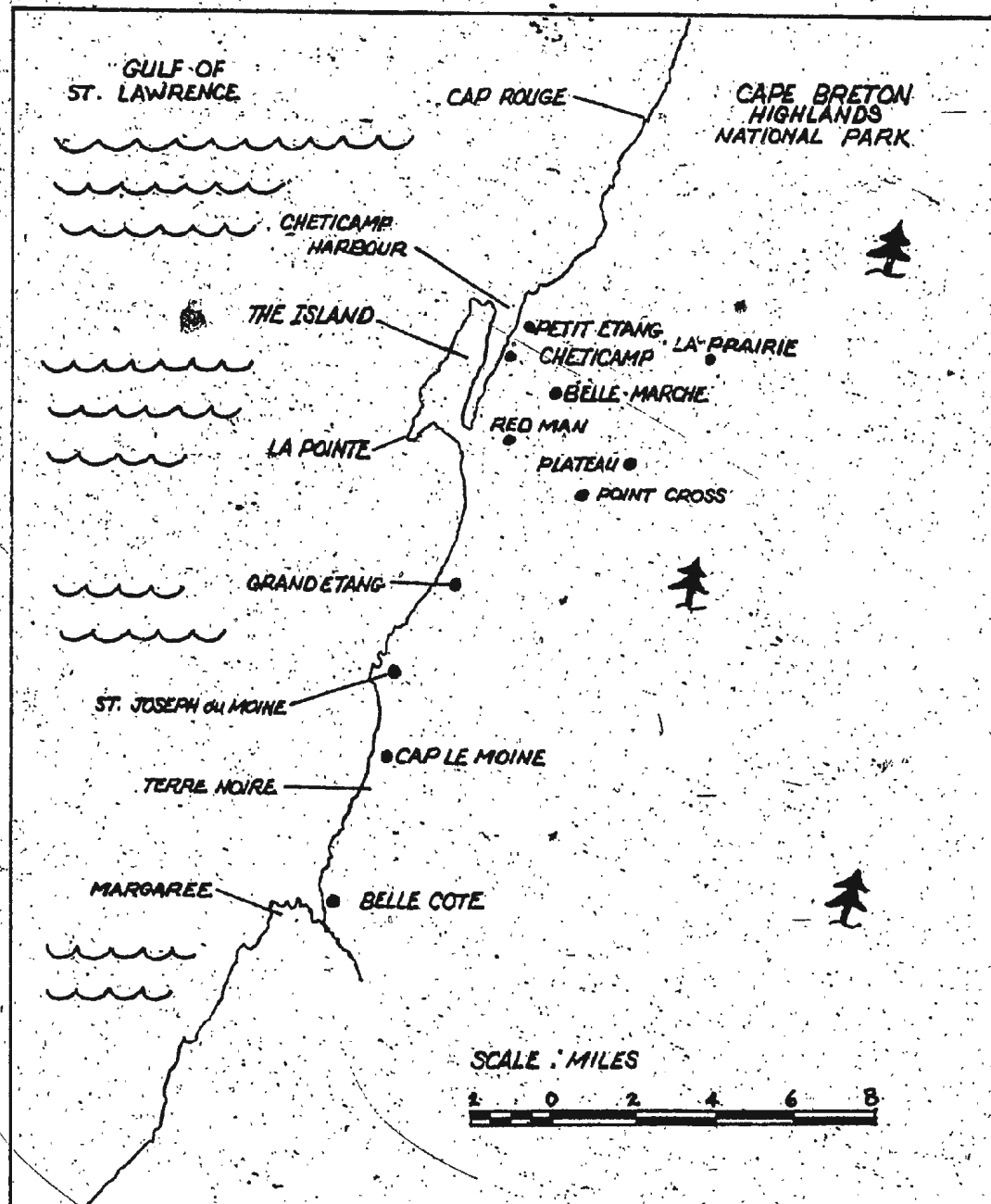
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<sup>1</sup>Place Names and Places of Nova Scotia, comp. C.B. Fergusson (Halifax: Public Archives of Nova Scotia, 1976), p. 125. See Chiasson, Chéticamp, p. 21 for the historical orthography of Chéticamp.

## Cape Breton, Nova Scotia



Cheticamp area on northwestern coast of Cape Breton,  
Nova Scotia.





National Park. At the edge of the park, the Chéticamp River runs into the ocean, and the rugged "mountains"<sup>2</sup> begin their ascent directly from the ocean.

It is the mountains that effectively isolate Chéticamp from the rest of Cape Breton. Although roads approach the area from three directions, notoriously unpredictable weather and road conditions in winter discourage outsiders from travelling to the area between October and May. The regional architecture of Chéticamp reflects the long, cold winters which are aggravated by the dreaded southeast wind from the mountains. Joined house and barn, the "snubbed" gable, and shuttered windows are local building characteristics which respond to the environment (see photograph).

Most outside traffic is due to summer tourism encouraged by the Park and the Cabot Trail. Thousands of tourists come to Chéticamp to enjoy the warm sandy beaches, the fine weather, the good food and the convivial atmosphere of the community.

### History

The Chéticamp coast of Cape Breton was important as a European summer fishery hundreds of years before permanent settlement took place. Basque, Norman, and Portuguese boats are known to have frequented the area

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<sup>2</sup> Properly designated hills, these are called "mountains" by the people of Chéticamp.



Architectural features common to Cheticamp: joined house and barn, and "snubbed" gable.

as early as the sixteenth century. When the island of Cape Breton was controlled by the French in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, fishing concessions were given to European fishermen on the provision that permanent settlements were not to be made, and that no trade was to be carried on with the Indians.<sup>3</sup>

The bulk of permanent settlers came to Chéticamp as a result of the Expulsion of the Acadians from Grand Pré, Nova Scotia, which occurred in 1755. After years of wandering in North America and Europe, some Acadians finally came to Isle St. Jean (now Prince Edward Island). In 1785-86, many of the Acadians who were forefathers of the present community came from Isle St. Jean to settle between Margaree Harbour and Chéticamp Harbour.<sup>4</sup> Until this time there were only two Acadian families in Chéticamp--Bois and Richard who came from Arichat in 1782.<sup>5</sup>

In 1790, a group of the Acadians in Chéticamp, called "les Quatorze Vieux" ("Fourteen Old Men") travelled to Sydney, Cape Breton, where they received a grant of land.

<sup>3</sup> Nicholas Denys, Descriptions and Natural History of the Coasts of North America (Acadia), originally published as Champlain Society Publications II (rpt. New York: Greenwood, 1968), p. 243.

<sup>4</sup> Où, Qui et Quoi dans le Village de Chéticamp, pamph. published by St. Peter's Parish Council, Chéticamp, 1978, [p. 1 of 51 pp.].

<sup>5</sup> Chiasson, Chéticamp, p. 29.

from Governor Macarmack. At that time they were given 7000 acres in the Chéticamp area.<sup>6</sup>

The Acadians first built their farms in a "valley" behind the present Chéticamp. In 1812, Monsignor Octave Plessis reported in his journal:

Il semble que les habitants auraient dû s'établir sur les bords de ce beau bassin qu'est le havre . . . Point du tout. Si vous en exceptez trois ou quatre, tous les autres . . . ont été se cantonner dans une affreuse vallée, bornée d'un côté par des montagnes entièrement couvertes de bois, et de l'autre par un coteau qui les éloigne du havre de près d'une lieue.<sup>7</sup>

The isolation provided by the mountains and the ocean gave the Acadian survivors of Grand Pré and Louisbourg some assurance of freedom from harassment by the English. Bernie LeVert, in his oral account of the settlement of the Acadians in Chéticamp, said:

Those who survived [the "dispersal"], few as they were . . . came [to Chéticamp]. They went first of all and hid in the mountains over there till they felt that they were more or less secure from the English.<sup>8</sup>

In the fifty years following settlement, the population grew, and land was cleared and farms were developed closer to the shore. In 1861, the Acadians of

<sup>6</sup> Chiasson, Chéticamp, p. 37.

<sup>7</sup> "Voyage de 1812", Le Foyer Canadien (Québec: 1865) as cited in Chiasson, Chéticamp, p. 37.

<sup>8</sup> Beaton Institute, tape, 1177.

Chéticamp were awarded a further 1000 acre grant of Shore land.<sup>9</sup> Today, evidence of abandoned farms and once cultivated lands mark the struggle of the forefathers of Chéticamp. From his father's home in St. Joseph du Moine, Freddie Aucoin pointed out to me during my field-work, the now overgrown land beside the mountain which had been cleared and settled by his ancestors.<sup>10</sup>

As in Acadie, before the Expulsion, farming continued to be an important part of the livelihood of the Acadians in Cape Breton, although the soil was mediocre by comparison. According to Chiasson:

La Charte de 1790 obligeait les 14 concessionnaires à cultiver chacun cinquante arpents sous peine de confiscation de leur terre. Il y eut de louables efforts.<sup>11</sup>

Similarly, Chief Justice A.C. Dodd noted in 1805 that " . . . the inhabitants are all french [sic] follow farming, particularly the raising of cattle."<sup>12</sup>

Although the early Acadians of Chéticamp were "basically farmers",<sup>13</sup> the fishery was also carried on to a lesser degree. By 1828, the fishing industry had

<sup>9</sup> Où, Qui et Quoi, [p. 1].

<sup>10</sup> Conversation, September 1978.

<sup>11</sup> Chéticamp, p. 57.

<sup>12</sup> Observations made in Exploring the Island of Cape Breton, ms. Dodd Papers, Public Archives of Nova Scotia, p. 147.

<sup>13</sup> Comment by Bert LeBoutillier to explain why the early Chéticampins were not particularly interested in fishing. Beaton Institute, tape, 1163.

grown to the extent, that MacGregor, in his Historical and Descriptive Sketches of the Maritime Colonies of British America, could note the development of a diversified economy:

. . . The Acadian French leave the cultivation of the soil to the management of their wives, daughters and younger sons . . . while the men exploit the resources of the sea.<sup>14</sup>

While the combined economy of farming and fishing continued to develop,<sup>15</sup> the traditional farming maintained an emotional prominence. Chiasson noted:

Endurcis par de continuelles épreuves . . . ces Acadiens gardaient encore la nostalgie de la vie paisible et calme des fermiers de Grand-Pré . . . La tourmente les avait arrachés brutalement de leurs terres. Elle avait duré longtemps mais n'avait pas totalement étouffé le goût de la terre, dans le coeur des anciens surtout.<sup>16</sup>

The continuity of the farming tradition in Chéticamp allowed the Acadians to cling to the imagination of the good life of the past.<sup>17</sup> "De plus, la ferme était un symbole de sécurité."<sup>18</sup> This security was material

<sup>14</sup> Historical and Descriptive Sketches of the Maritime Colonies of British America (1828; rpt. New York: Johnson, 1968), p. 117.

<sup>15</sup> "La Vie Economique", Chéticamp, pp. 43-61.

<sup>16</sup> Chéticamp, p. 57.

<sup>17</sup> Richard Hofstadter refers to these idealistic memories and conceptions of farming life in "The Agrarian Myth and the Commercial Reality", The Age of Reform (New York: Vintage Books, 1955), pp. 23-36.

<sup>18</sup> Marc-Adelard Tremblay et Marc LaPlante, Famille et Parenté en Acadie, Publications in Ethnology, No. 3 (Ottawa: National Museum of Canada, 1971), p. 14.



as well as spiritual. Chiasson, in discussing la vie économique of Chéticamp, describes the significant numbers of livestock and the abundant harvests from the virgin soil of early Chéticamp.<sup>19</sup> By the middle of the nineteenth century, "D'ailleurs . . . la culture du sol comptera malheureusement de moins en moins d'adeptes."<sup>20</sup>

The decline of farming in Chéticamp is documented in the censuses taken in Cape Breton during the nineteenth century. The census of 1818 indicates that every working man in Chéticamp was called a "farmer".<sup>21</sup> The census of 1838 refers to the Chéticamp Acadian men as "farmer-fishermen".<sup>22</sup> A note in the 1860 Census advises enumerators: "'farmer' is intended to apply to persons cultivating the soil with a plough, even though engaged in other pursuits".<sup>23</sup> The statistics of animals and

<sup>19</sup> Chéticamp, p. 57.

<sup>20</sup> Chéticamp, p. 59.

<sup>21</sup> "Census Rolls of Cape Breton Island, 1818" (Appendix B), Holland's Description of Cape Breton Island and Other Documents, comp. D.C. Harvey (Halifax: Public Archives of Nova Scotia, 1935), pp. 158-159.

<sup>22</sup> "Settlement of Cheticamp, Inverness Co.", Nova Scotia Census Report, 1838 (Halifax: Public Archives of Nova Scotia, n.d.), RG 1, vol. 449, p. 133. Microfilm copy Beaton Institute.

<sup>23</sup> Fulton, "Instructions", Census of Nova Scotia, 1860-1861, Inverness Co., Public Archives mss., n.p.

amounts of crops raised show that most of the "farmers" were more than worthy of the name.<sup>24</sup> In the 1871 Census, change becomes evident: approximately one-quarter of the men in Chéticamp were called "fishermen" while the remainder were called "farmers".<sup>25</sup> Based on the 1860 note, this probably means that one-quarter of the men were employed at fishing only, while the remainder were employed at farming only, or at both fishing and farming. The census for 1881 is not yet available.<sup>26</sup> However, statistics from the period 1881-1932 reveal that the fishing industry continued to grow.<sup>27</sup> Unfortunately, statistics concerning land use and occupational information are difficult to analyse because they are given by county only after 1891. Statistical data, including that available from the Nova Scotia Department of Agriculture,

<sup>24</sup> "Return of Agricultural Produce, Stock, Fisheries, etc., 1860-61, Polling District 11", Nova Scotia Census (Halifax: Public Archives of Nova Scotia, n.d.), Abstracts 1-6. Microfilm copy Beaton Institute.

<sup>25</sup> Canadian Census of 1871, Province of Nova Scotia District 203, Inverness, Sub-division L11 Cheticamp, pp. 1-65.

<sup>26</sup> Correspondence with the Public Archives of Nova Scotia (Dec. 1979), reveals that, for reasons of confidence, censuses are not made available until 100 years after collection,

<sup>27</sup> Census of Canada, Statistics Canada.

does not indicate the number of persons involved in farming in Chéticamp for the years following 1871. However, judging by the present day community's dependence on fishing, and the lack of farming, it seems possible to surmise that, since 1900, more and more Acadians in Chéticamp made their living solely by fishing. Today, kitchen gardens, a few hens, and rarely, a cow, are survivals of the vital farming industry of the past.

Lack of restorative methods may have been one of the reasons for Chéticamp's decreasing dependence upon the soil. It has been suggested by Dr. Robert Morgan that, since the Annapolis Valley was self-restoring as a result of "silting-out", the Acadians who came to Chéticamp from there did not have a traditional knowledge of fertilization and crop rotation.<sup>28</sup>

As with the fishing off the coast of Chéticamp, the resources of the wooded hills behind Chéticamp were also tapped before permanent settlement of the area took place. Holland observed in 1768: -

the [Harbour at Chetican]. . . affords Shelter for small craft; many of which the French built here, the Woods producing proper Materials [sic]<sup>29</sup>

This has not changed with the coming of the Acadians--since settlement, the men of Chéticamp have spent the winters in

<sup>28</sup> Conversation, September 1979.

<sup>29</sup> Holland, surveyor and captain, gave a description of Cape Breton which was completed in 1768. It was published as Holland's Description of Cape Breton Island and Other Documents, comp. D.C. Harvey (Halifax: Public Archives of Nova Scotia, 1935), p. 62.

the mountains cutting firewood, and logs, and now, pulpwood.<sup>30</sup>

In the decade before the settlement of Chéticamp by the Acadians, the coastal area was used for a summer fishery operated by the Jersey firm headed by Robin. Originally established at Arichat, Cape Breton in 1764, this commercial fishery was expanded by Charles Robin to include Chéticamp in 1776.<sup>31</sup> The business in Chéticamp was initially called Messers. Robin, Pippins, and Company, with a head office in Halifax.<sup>32</sup> By 1914, it had undergone changes in ownership and the head office was moved to its present location at Gaspé, Québec.<sup>33</sup> In the beginning of the Jersey operation, Acadians from Arichat worked as summer labourers or fishermen at Chéticamp. After 1785, there was a year round labour force to be found among the Acadians in Chéticamp.<sup>34</sup>

The Jerseymen who came to Arichat and Chéticamp were descendents of French-Protestants, called Huguenots, who

<sup>30</sup> Où, Qui et Quoi, [p. 1].

<sup>31</sup> C. R. Aucoin, History of Chéticamp, pamph., n.d., [p. 2 of 8 pp.].

<sup>32</sup> "Fishing Industry in 1500", Cape Breton Post, 23 March 1962, p. 21.

<sup>33</sup> Marguerite Syvret, "Jersey Settlements in Gaspé", extracted from The Bulletin of the Société Jersiaise, vol. 18 (1963), pp. 281-295.

<sup>34</sup> Aucoin, History of Chéticamp, [p. 4].

had sought refuge from bigotry in France by coming under English rule in the Channel Islands.<sup>35</sup> Along with a mandate to set up fisheries in Cape Breton, they were given grants of land by the British Colonial government of Cape Breton. In Chéticamp, the area known as "The Island" was given to the Jerseymen. As well, a grant of land called "The Farm", located near Point Cross was given. An Anglican church was built on that location. This church is commonly called "the Jerseymen's church", and is presently in a state of disrepair. (See sketch.)

Wealth accumulated from the fishery and other trade, combined with their adherence to the Anglican faith and the English language, made the Jerseymen an economically and politically favoured minority. During the war between England and France in 1794, Jerseymen were selected by Governor Macarmick to man a fort built in Cape Breton in order to safeguard against Acadian insurrection.<sup>36</sup> Also, lands were granted to the Jersey businessmen in Cape Breton during the years 1792-1816 when there was a

<sup>35</sup> Trevor-Roper states that the Huguenots were accused of practising witchcraft in France in 1609. They were expelled from France in 1685. "The European Witch-Craze", Witchcraft and Sorcery, ed. Max Marwick (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1970), p. 146.

<sup>36</sup> R. Morgan, Orphan Outpost: Cape Breton Colony 1784-1820, unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Ottawa, 1972, p. 90.



Jerseymen's Church, built ca. 1889.



"land grant freeze".<sup>37</sup> Clara Dennis observed in 1942 that the Jerseymen in Cape Breton have had a history of prominence in both political and business endeavours.<sup>38</sup> In the past they emphasized cultural and economic differences by maintaining a social aloofness from the Acadians. The managers and clerks who worked for Robin came directly from Jersey, and were not allowed to marry or settle in Chéticamp while they were with the firm.<sup>39</sup> Marguerite Syvret, in "Jersey Settlements in Gaspé" commented on this rule of the Robin firm:

The discipline imposed by Charles Robin and his successors was very strict. The establishments were entirely masculine, managers having the choice between remaining wifeless or leaving their wives behind in Jersey.<sup>40</sup>

In Chéticamp, these restrictions tended to widen the social distance between the businessmen and the Acadians.

#### Economic System of the Fishery

The Acadians of Chéticamp were employed by Robin as fishermen or labourers. Most of them worked on shallops or schooners owned by the Robin company, although a few owned their own small boats. Most of the fish processing

<sup>37</sup> Morgan, Orphan Outpost, p. 78.

<sup>38</sup> Cape Breton Over (Toronto: Ryerson, 1942), p. 11.

<sup>39</sup> Bert LeBoutillier, Beaton Institute, tape, 1163. Also see Dennis, Cape Breton Over, p. 11.

<sup>40</sup> The Bulletin of the Société Jersiaise, p. 286.

operation was also owned by Robin, who therefore controlled the market.<sup>41</sup> J.J. Chiasson reflected about the buying of the fish, that the Robin company accepted only codfish from the Acadians, and ignored the value of the plentiful haddock.<sup>42</sup>

A barter system was used in which labour and fish were exchanged for goods at the general store which was owned by Robin. This system of business used by the Jerseymen was justified by Bert LeBoutillier, grandson of the first Jerseyman to settle in Cheticamp. He maintained that the Acadian fishermen were not enterprising, and received little for their fish because they had not contributed to any of the expense of catching them. He related the following narrative to support his claim that the Acadians were uncaring about the problems of outfitting the fishing boats:

There was a case in question. I always remember my father saying. He used to go down when the boats came in, to see what their catch was like, and how they were making out. He was manager. He was manager of Robin, Jones and Whitman at that time. And he'd say, "How are you doing?" And this one day. There's a bit of breeze had come up. And they'd come in early. So he was wanting to know why they came in early. And he said oh, he couldn't do anything with the trawls-- it was blowing too much. And he asked the fishermen, "I hope you picked up all your trawls." "Oh, no, no," he says. "It was blowing too hard," he said.

<sup>41</sup> Jim and Pat Lotz, Cape Breton Island (Vancouver: Douglas, David and Charles, 1974), p. 156.

<sup>42</sup> Beaton Institute, tape, 1157.

"We just cut the lines and let them go." So he said, "My gosh, that's expensive!" "Oh, that's alright," he says. "We'll just go and get another set," he says, "from the company." I don't know how they figured it, but they seemed to think that because it didn't cost them any money, that all they had to do was go and pick it up. "So," he said, "you must realize that every time you increase the cost by doing things like this, that is going to lessen the price of the fish." And then of course-- [chuckle by LeBoutillier]. I hate to tell you in French what would pass in the language used. But it would be pretty rough. And they swear at the company, and call them thieves, robbing from the poor. Somehow they thought that the company should pay for this equipment but not take it out of the fish. You see. Which, business-wise, was impossible.<sup>43</sup>

LeBoutillier added to this the implication that the Acadian fishermen were dishonest as well as lazy:

And there was all kinds of tricks they used to do. Like some even shoved stones inside the fish. Or throw a couple of buckets of water on the fish before you weighed them, you know-- get more weight-- make more.<sup>44</sup>

An article in the Cape Breton Post described as "slavery" the terms under which the Acadians worked for the Jersey businessmen: "Many were everlastingly in debt to the Robin firm."<sup>45</sup>

Bernie LeVert, in commenting upon the exploitation of the Acadians by the Jerseymen, said:

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<sup>43</sup> 1163.

<sup>44</sup> 1163.

<sup>45</sup> "Fishing Industry in 1500", 23 March 1962. Also M. Syvret, "Jersey Settlement in Gaspé", p. 288.

It was not as bad as the coal miners and the company control [found in the Sydney area of Cape Breton]. Really, they were helpless and they were at the mercy of these Jerseymen. It so happened that those Jerseymen who were there in charge, were at least half-humane. Then at least the people were treated proportionately. I think, because they didn't have the numbers [the Acadians?], obviously the tensions could only grow to a point. And . . . Nevertheless, the principle of being exploited really brought this idea into fruition, the idea of forming a co-operative and looking after your affairs,<sup>46</sup>

The situation remained unchanged well into the present century although a fishermen's union was "going strong" in 1918.<sup>47</sup> This was undoubtedly the Canadian Fisheries Association which was formed in 1915.<sup>48</sup> It is the opinion of J.J. Chiasson, that the union did nothing to improve conditions or fish prices for the Acadians. In fact, nothing changed until the co-operatives and credit unions began to operate in Cheticamp in the 1930's as a result of the work of Dr. M.M. Coady and the "Antigonish Movement".<sup>49</sup> From that time, the majority of Cheticamp fishermen owned their own fishing gear, and have marketed their catch to co-operatives or to other competitive firms. Chiasson

<sup>46</sup> 1177.

<sup>47</sup> J.J. Chiasson, 1157.

<sup>48</sup> S.A. Saunders, Economic Welfare of the Maritime Provinces (Wolfville, Nova Scotia: Acadia University Press, 1932), p. 51.

<sup>49</sup> The "Antigonish Movement" is a program of economic and social betterment through co-operatives. See M.M. Coady, Masters of their Own Destiny: The Story of the Antigonish Movement (New York: Harper and Bros., 1939).

noted of this change in the economy:

... ce n'est qu'avec l'apparition du mouvement coopératif que les Acadiens ont pu jouir d'une libération économique relative. Ce mouvement a forcé ces compagnies à cesser leur exploitation éhontée ou à fermer leurs portes.<sup>50</sup>

### Religion

The prominence and beauty of Eglise Saint-Pierre de Chéticamp is immediate evidence of the importance of the Catholic religion to the community. Spigelman observed in his assessment of the Acadians and their values, that the Catholic religion was an expression of Acadian culture and nationality:

The Acadians' religious devotion and their national consciousness were inextricably entwined; the Holy Virgin Mary became their patron saint, the day of the Assumption their national holiday, the "Ave Maris Stella" their national anthem.<sup>51</sup>

In their religious devotion, however, the Chéticantins appear to be more influenced by "folk" religious patterns than by the official view of the church. Many social organizations in the community have been of a religious nature. Marie Deveaux, age seventy-two, told of her teenage experience in the Children of Mary organization which, at the time in Chéticamp, prohibited young ladies

<sup>50</sup> Anselme Chiasson, "Quatrième Fascicule: De 1857 à 1976", Petite Manuel d'Histoire d'Acadie des débuts à 1976, eds. D'Entremont, Daigle, Thériault, Chiasson (Univ. de Moncton: Librairie Acadienne, 1976), p. 21.

<sup>51</sup> Martin S. Spigelman, The Acadian Renaissance and the Development of Acadian-Canadian Relations 1864-1912, unpublished Ph.D thesis, Dalhousie Univ., 1975, p. 433.

from dancing at parties. Once, having disobeyed this rule, she was ordered by the nun in charge of the Children of Mary to confess her "sin" to the priest. Instead, Marie told her story to the statue of the Virgin, knowing that Our Lady would understand.<sup>52</sup>

Until Vatican II of 1962 which dramatically changed some aspects of Catholic ritual, religious processions had been an important part of the community's religious devotion. Bernie LeVert noted that "Processions were a very big occasion for these people."<sup>53</sup> In Chéticamp: Histoire et Tradition acadiennes there is a description of la Fête Dieu which involved most of the community, including a "military" guard of honour.<sup>54</sup> During the month of May, the people of Chéticamp expressed their devotion to the Virgin Mary by carrying a statue of her through the community at the head of a great procession.<sup>55</sup> With Vatican II, said Father Desjardins, "traditional ways of procession have been left aside," and the people have "... a new approach ... a new way of expressing faith."<sup>56</sup>

<sup>52</sup> Beaton Institute, tape, 1977.

<sup>53</sup> Conversation, November 1979.

<sup>54</sup> Chiasson, p. 215.

<sup>55</sup> Bernie LeVert, conversation, November 1979.

<sup>56</sup> Telephone conversation, November 1979.



There was, however, a religious walking "pilgrimage" held in Chéticamp in 1979.<sup>57</sup>

Participation in certain religious festivals continues to be a major part of Chéticamp community life. Besides the more generally known activities of Christmas and Easter, distinctly French Catholic festivals are maintained. La Chandeleur (February 2, Feast of the Purification), and la Mi-Carême (middle of Lent) are still celebrated and stories are told of past celebrations.

The Sunday obligations of church attendance and abstinence from work continue to be faithfully observed in Chéticamp. Past social identification in this religious observance is depicted in Marie Deveaux' story of her confrontation with a sorcier who was trying to sell potato creels on a Sunday:

I told him, "We don't do business on a Sunday. My husband is in church. Come back when he is here. Sunday is not a day to do business."<sup>58</sup>

Although the Acadians' participation in church attendance and religious festivals may have been partly for the secular enjoyments of these activities, nonetheless such involvement resulted in a consciousness of being strongly Catholic.

However, it appears that some people of Chéticamp have had a less than reverent attitude toward the priests

<sup>57</sup> Father Desjardins, telephone conversation, November 1979.

<sup>58</sup> Beaton Institute, tape, 1165.

who have served in the community during the present century.<sup>59</sup> The business affiliations of Father Fiset, parish priest 1875-1909, were negatively commented upon.<sup>60</sup>

D. MacInnes noted in his historical view of the Acadians' relationship with their clergy that some Chéticantins appealed to the church to censure Father Fiset for "acting the merchant".<sup>61</sup> Father LeBlanc, parish priest 1909-1953, was considered to be too harsh in his prohibition of parties and dances,<sup>62</sup> particularly when it was known that a contemporary Margaree priest openly played the fiddle.<sup>63</sup> Several informants<sup>64</sup> referred to incidents when his rules were ignored. Ray LeFort stated that, although the priest was openly given great respect in past and present Chéticamp, he was discussed within the privacy of the home "and it was not always good".<sup>65</sup> He felt that the superior

<sup>59</sup> Bernie LeVert is in disagreement with this opinion. He felt that his parents' generation were "under the thumb" of the priest. 1177.

<sup>60</sup> J.J. Chiasson, 1157; Ulysses LeLievre, Beaton Institute, tape, 1146.

<sup>61</sup> "The Acadians: Race Memory Isolated in Small Space" [sic], Banked Fires - The Ethnics of Nova Scotia, ed. D.F. Campbell (Port Credit, Ontario: The Scribbler's Press, No. 1, 1978), p. 64.

<sup>62</sup> Almost every informant provided information to this effect.

<sup>63</sup> Marie Deveau, 1077.

<sup>64</sup> Including Denise Deveau, Beaton Institute, tape, 1166; Marie Deveau, 1077.

<sup>65</sup> Beaton Institute, tape, 1178.

education, the non-Chéticamp background, and the business orientation of the parish priests made them aloof from the ordinary lives of the people of Chéticamp. He noted that even more recent priests, Father Chiasson and Father Aucoin, both natives of Chéticamp, were considered to be somewhat "outside" the community because they had spent long periods of time "away".<sup>66</sup>

Except for the few Jersey men who were Anglicans, the community of Chéticamp was entirely Roman Catholic until 1891.<sup>67</sup> The out-migration from the Maritimes in the late nineteenth century<sup>68</sup> accounted for some of the changes in religion in Chéticamp. Chiasson noted that some of the Chéticamp people who went "away" to study, particularly to the United States, departed from their traditional religion. On their return to Chéticamp they maintained their new religions, and influenced other members of their families in this direction.<sup>69</sup> The 1911 statistics of religion for

<sup>66</sup> Ray LeFort, 1178.

<sup>67</sup> Census statistics indicate that in 1881 there were four Anglicans in Chéticamp; the remainder, approximately three thousand people, were Roman Catholic. Nova Scotia Census, Sub-Division L11 Chéticamp, pp. 1-65.

<sup>68</sup> Spigelman, The Acadian Renaissance; Allan Brookes, "Out-Migration from the Maritime Provinces, 1860-1900: Some Preliminary Considerations", Acadiensis, 5:2 (1976), pp. 26-55; M.C. MacLean, "Cape Breton a Half Century Ago", Public Affairs, 11:4 (1939), pp. 184-192.

<sup>69</sup> Chéticamp, p. 157.

Chéticamp record a minor growth in several religions at this time: there were twelve Anglicans, seven Baptists, and three Methodists.<sup>70</sup> Later, in 1930, a few more people who travelled to the United States returned to Chéticamp as Jehovah's Witnesses.<sup>71</sup> Many of these returned to the Catholic faith, but in the meantime were the object of discrimination by the rest of the community.<sup>72</sup> During the period 1901-1941, the average number of non-Catholic persons in Chéticamp did not exceed fifty, in the total average population of three thousand.<sup>73</sup> However, the initial departure from the traditional religion by Chéticamp natives had a considerable impact. References to these events by several informants<sup>74</sup> indicate that they were significant in the history of the community.

### Language

The distinctive dialect of Chéticamp, which is filled with archaisms from the seventeenth century, sets the people

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<sup>70</sup>Census of Canada vol. II, p. 35. Microfiche, College of Cape Breton Library.

<sup>71</sup>Chiasson, Chéticamp, p. 158.

<sup>72</sup>Denise Deveau, conversation, January 1980.

<sup>73</sup>Based on Canada Census Statistics.

<sup>74</sup>Father Charles Aucoin, conversation, June 1979; Father Desjardins, conversation, May 1978; Denise Deveau, conversations, November 1978, January 1980; Marie Deveau, conversation, June 1978.

apart from other French-speaking groups. Pascal Poirier, in Le Parler Franco-Acadien et ses Origines, noted:

Il serait possible de retrouver, par le seul examen de la langue que parlent aujourd'hui les Acadiens, la province de France d'où sont sortis leurs ancêtres.

Cette langue n'est pas un dialecte qui leur est exclusivement particulier . . . c'est le français même qui se parlait dans la Touraine et le nord-ouest du Berry, au milieu du XVIIe siècle.<sup>75</sup>

Differences between Chéticamp French and Québec French is observable in summer when visitors from Québec communicate with the Chéticamp people in English because common understanding in French is too tedious.

The use of the French-Acadian dialect in Chéticamp homes by both adults and children helps to ensure its strength. At present, French is the teaching language in Chéticamp schools.<sup>76</sup> It was not always so. At the turn of the twentieth century, it appeared that the education system in Nova Scotia was a threat to the French language of the Acadians. Although the quality of education in Chéticamp increased steadily since 1800,<sup>77</sup> concern was expressed late in the nineteenth century that the progress of the Acadian students was considerably less

<sup>75</sup> Le Parler Franco-Acadien et ses Origines (Québec: Imprimerie Franciscaine Missionnaire, 1928), p. 9. Also Geneviève Massignon, Les Parler français d'Acadie 2 vols. (Paris: Klincksieck, 1962).

<sup>76</sup> Bernie LeVert, conversation, January 1980.

<sup>77</sup> Chiasson, Chéticamp, pp. 159-169. It was noted by Spigelman, however, that because of traditional attitudes toward earning a living from the soil, Acadian attendance at school was not significant until the late nineteenth century. The Acadian Renaissance, p. 51.



than that of English-speaking students in Nova Scotia.<sup>78</sup>  
 The "Acadian Commission" was formed in 1902 to investigate this problem. They observed, among other things, that French-speaking children were being taught by teachers who knew only English. They concluded:

That the French-speaking sections of the province were at a very serious disadvantage in the matter of education, and that the cause was to be found largely in the assumption that the children must be taught exclusively in English.<sup>79</sup>

The commission recommended that the French language be used to teach the Acadians until grade four, during which time they were learning the English language. From then they were to be taught in the English language.<sup>80</sup> It was also recommended that teachers in French-speaking districts of Nova Scotia be bilingual.<sup>81</sup>

In spite of these recommendations, the previous situation continued for many years, in which "a bi-lingual [sic] [school] system generally resulted in both English and French students speaking English".<sup>82</sup> However, there was

<sup>78</sup> Manual of the Public Instruction Acts and Regulations of the Council of Public Instruction of Nova Scotia (Halifax: King's Printer, 1921), pp. 308-311.

<sup>79</sup> James Bingay, Public Education in Nova Scotia (Kingston: Jackson Press, 1919), p. 73. This comment by the commission was interesting in view of the School Act of 1841 which allowed for the use of French in French district schools in Nova Scotia. Bingay, *ibid.*, p. 51.

<sup>80</sup> Bingay, Public Education in Nova Scotia, p. 73.

<sup>81</sup> Bingay, p. 73.

<sup>82</sup> Spigelman, p. 44.

gradual departure from the situation beginning in the 1930's and 1940's when all elementary grades in Chéticamp were taught in French, while high school was taught mainly in English in preparation for Provincial Examinations which were in the English language.<sup>83</sup> At present, there is a continuing effort to maintain the traditional language of the Acadians through the school system.<sup>84</sup>

### Ethnicity

The consciousness of ethnicity<sup>85</sup> which has historically been experienced by the Chéticantins sets them apart, not only from English-speaking, non-Catholic groups, but also from other French-speaking groups including Acadians in Cape Breton and elsewhere. The more common demarcations of language, religion and cultural traits are observed in the Chéticamp Acadians' relationships with the Jerseyemen or with the French from Québec or France. However, the Chéticantins appear to find geographical barriers and differences in cultural development sufficient to separate them socially from other Acadian groups with similar historical backgrounds.

It has already been discussed that communication in

<sup>83</sup> Bernie LeVert, conversation, January 1980.

<sup>84</sup> Bernie LeVert, conversation, January 1980.

<sup>85</sup> Stephen Stern, "Ethnic Folklore and the Folklore of Ethnicity", Western Folklore (Special Issue) XXXVI:1 (1977), pp. 7-32. Also, Larry Danielson, "Introduction", Western Folklore (Special Issue) XXXVI:1 (1977), pp. 1-5.

their "common" language is difficult with Québécois. Similarly, the point of cultural differentiation is made by referring to any native of France as a "Frenchman". Ray LeFort stressed that some of his ancestors were not Acadian but came directly from France to Canada. At that time, common ancestry and language did not prompt protection and immediate acceptance of these newcomers. Instead, these French fugitives were feared by the Chéticantins because of the possibility of British reprisals:

They [his ancestors] were sailors who had jumped ship and they were trying to get away from the English. They were two brothers. They [the people of Chéticamp] told them to get away because they were sailors, they were soldiers, and they knew that if the English found them . . . So they eventually went back to P.E.I., Isle St. Jean. One of them came back later and married someone from Chéticamp.<sup>86</sup>

Further evidence of Chéticamp's insularity is found in intra-group distinctions between the Chéticantins and other Acadians on Cape Breton. Isle Madame, for example, is an Acadian community on the southeastern coast of Cape Breton which is historically similar to Chéticamp. Father Dan Doucette, pastor of Petit-de-Grat on Isle Madame, noted that there is very little interchange between the two Acadian communities.<sup>87</sup> Visiting between the two groups is infrequent<sup>88</sup> and in the past thirteen years, only "half a dozen" marriages took place between persons of Isle Madame

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<sup>86</sup> 1178.

<sup>87</sup> Conversation, November 1979.

<sup>88</sup> Denise Deveau, conversation, November 1979.

and Chéticamp.<sup>89</sup> One reason for this lack of social intercourse may be the differing tendencies in cultural consciousness found in these Acadian communities. Whereas Chéticamp displays a notable degree of vital conservatism of strictly Acadian traditional ways, the Acadian culture on Isle Madame appears to have undergone dilution as a result of the English-Irish-Scottish influx, and by significant numbers of Jersey men who have retained social power.<sup>90</sup>

In contrast to the Chéticantins for whom French is their first language, the Acadians on Isle Madame, with the exception of those at Petit-de-Grat, speak mainly English, and their children do not learn the dialect of their forefathers.<sup>91</sup> Also unlike Chéticamp, the traditional Acadian festivals based on religious feasts have disappeared.<sup>92</sup> There is however, an annual "Acadian Festival" on Isle Madame which features secular songs, dances and parades, but this festival reputedly has more

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<sup>89</sup> Father Dan Doucette, conversation, November 1979.

<sup>90</sup> J.G. Bourinot, Cape Breton and Its Memorials (Montreal: Brown and Co., 1892), p. 104.

<sup>91</sup> Father Dan Doucette, conversation, September 1978.

<sup>92</sup> However, retired parish priest, Father Gerrior remembers celebrating Mi-Carême many years ago. Beaton Institute, tape, 1166.

participation from Québec than from Chéticamp.<sup>93</sup>

On the other hand, the economic background has been similar to that of Chéticamp--the Jerseymen have controlled the fishery and have employed the Acadians as fishermen or labourers.<sup>94</sup> A tradition of tension still exists between the Acadians and the Jerseymen on Isle Madame and this is sometimes expressed in devil lore. The Acadians explain the Jerseymen's better fortune with the proverb, "The devil helps his own".<sup>95</sup> Both Father Dan Doucette and Father Conrad Gerrior observed that devil lore in the form of legends appears to be common on Isle Madame but they had not heard any sorcery beliefs.<sup>96</sup> Devil legends were also found in the "Acadian folk stories" collected by Lois Sampson.

<sup>93</sup> Father Dan Doucette, conversation, September 1978.

<sup>94</sup> "Fishing Industry in 1500", Cape Breton Post, 23 March 1962.

<sup>95</sup> Pearl Mauger, conversation, September 1978. This proverb is found in John Ray, Compleat [sic] Collection of English Proverbs, 1st. ed. (1670), as cited in Sir Gurney Benham, Benham's Book of Quotations, Proverbs and Household Words, 2nd. ed. (New York: Putnam, 1936), p. 890.

<sup>96</sup> Although there are implications of devil lore in the sorcellerie of Chéticamp, it is not expressed directly in the narratives. This is discussed more fully in a later chapter.

Another expression of Chéticamp's intra-group ethnic distinction is found in the community's relationship to the Magdalen Islands which is inhabited mainly by Acadians. Located in the Gulf of St. Lawrence, the Magdalen Islands have had communication links with Chéticamp through the fishing industry. A few people from the Islands have migrated to Cap Rouge, near Chéticamp, but "les Canadiens", as some of these were called, were considered to be different. Several were accused by the Chéticantins of "sorcellage". It is interesting to note that some of the sorcery beliefs found in the Magdalen Islands are similar to those found in Chéticamp.<sup>97</sup>

The religious and linguistic solidarity of the Acadians in Chéticamp, as well as the economic subordination already mentioned, found the Jerseymen their prime target of suspicion. Many of the Chéticantins did not know that the Jerseymen's religion was Anglican--only that it was some "different" religion. Since their arrival in Chéticamp in 1776, the Jerseymen have been able to speak French, but they have maintained the English language as their preferred means of communication.

Less openly discussed actions by the Jersey businessmen in Chéticamp's past served to jar the moral convictions of the Acadians. For example, during the time that the

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<sup>97</sup> Such observation was made by Sister Catherine Jolicoeur, correspondence, August 1978. Also, Anselme Chiasson, Les Légendes des Iles de la Madeleine, pp. 64-81.



Jerseymen controlled the fishing industry, the employees of the Robin-Jones company were reputed to have seduced some of the Chéticamp women and sired a number of children. Restrictions on exogamy placed upon the Robin-Jones employees in the community may have contributed to these actions. Father Charles Aucoin suggested that some of the poorer women--widows, for instance--were taken advantage of in return for goods available only through the Robin-Jones business. He stressed that, except for these cases, illegitimacy was rare in Chéticamp. Several Jersey names survive in Chéticamp because of these births.<sup>98</sup>

Although the Acadians freely acknowledge a past dislike of the Jerseymen, the stabilization of their economy has resulted in a present attitude of benign neighbourliness toward the minority group in their midst. However, the past is not totally forgotten and subtle retaliation is evident. For instance there may be a tendency to disregard the mercantile significance of the Jerseymen in Chéticamp's past. It is noteworthy that the publication Où, Qui et Quoi dans le Village de Chéticamp does not mention the Jerseymen's part in the history of the community's economy. In present day discussions, Jerseymen are often referred to as "one of them", keeping alive a tradition of fear and distrust.

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<sup>98</sup> Conversation, November 1978.

### Values and Community Ideals

Exoteric and esoteric views<sup>99</sup> of the Chéticamp community coincide with many of the personal observations of the author in forming a picture of the values and ideals of the community. Having a "history of hard work and determination",<sup>100</sup> the Acadians of Chéticamp are described by fellow Cape Bretoners as "industrious";<sup>101</sup> "ambitious . . . good workers".<sup>102</sup> The Chéticantins themselves, particularly the men, often stress that their fathers had worked hard and provided well for their families.<sup>103</sup> It was commented by Kay MacDonald of the Beaton Institute that "they must have worked hard to have an area that looks so good."<sup>104</sup> Described as a "thriving center"<sup>105</sup> by the Nova Scotia Tour Book, the community of Chéticamp boasts a Village with eighteen stores, five restaurants, two movie theatres,

<sup>99</sup> Wm. Hugh Janson, "The Esoteric-exoteric Factor in Folklore"; Dundas, The Study of Folklore (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1965), pp. 43-51.

<sup>100</sup> Multicultural Association of Nova Scotia, People of Nova Scotia, Book 1 (Halifax: Multicultural Association of Nova Scotia, 1980), p. 1.

<sup>101</sup> Kay MacDonald, Beaton Institute, conversation, November 1979.

<sup>102</sup> Hilda Day, conversation, November 1979.

<sup>103</sup> For instance, Joseph A. Devéaux, Beaton Institute, tape, 1179.

<sup>104</sup> Conversation, November 1979.

<sup>105</sup> Nova Scotia Tour Book (Halifax: Nova Scotia Department of Tourism, 1978), p. 108.

three museums, three fish plants, eleven motels and a hospital.<sup>106</sup> Throughout the area, there is a stir of activity as houses are built, boats enter the harbour, gardens flourish, and trade bustles on the main thoroughfare. The houses, barns and yards are well kept. Ray LeFort proudly noted about Chéticamp: "They always looked after their houses. If there was a pile of wood, it was always well packed."<sup>107</sup> Most of the houses visited by the author offered a prosperous mixture of rural comfort and modern convenience. Within this context, the author observed that the tourist guide's assurance of hospitality in Chéticamp<sup>108</sup> is amply fulfilled, especially in the form of food which is offered as "a cup of tea".

Historical documentation of 1805 implies a similar picture of Chéticamp: "Cheticam is . . . by far the best built Village in the Island [Cape Breton]. Here are three grist mills, one House of Consequence carries on the fishery here . . ."<sup>109</sup> Bourinot stated further of the Acadians in 1892: ". . . now they take a share in all active pursuits of life, with energy, intelligence and enterprise . . ."<sup>110</sup>

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<sup>106</sup> Ou, Qui et Quoi, pp. 28, 32.

<sup>107</sup> 1178.

<sup>108</sup> Nova Scotia Tour Book, p. 108.

<sup>109</sup> Dodd, Observations, p. 4.

<sup>110</sup> Cape Breton and Its Memorials, p. 106.

The solidarity of the community and the achievement of its people have had, as their foundation, the large and united patriarchal family. Tremblay and LaPlante noted in Famille et Parenté en Acadie that the Acadian family was the "gardienne des valeurs nationales et religieuses".<sup>111</sup> Indeed, "The Acadian patriarchal family . . . was at the very heart of all economic, social, political and religious activities of the group . . ."<sup>112</sup> Joseph A. Deveaux (and others) stressed that the head of the family was strong and hard working, and "if he did not have ten, fifteen children, then he was not a man".<sup>113</sup> Although it was the woman's job to look after the children, the garden, and the farm animals, it was the man as provider and decision-maker, who was ultimately responsible for the care and control of the family.

### Summary

The values and character of the community of Chéticamp are part of an Acadian heritage, which, combined with geographic factors, have produced a complex mixture of progressiveness and conservatism.

The historical consciousness of the Acadians was one of the main factors in determining their attitudes and

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<sup>111</sup> Famille et Parenté en Acadie, p. 128.

<sup>112</sup> Famille et Parenté en Acadie, p. xxi.

<sup>113</sup> Joseph A. Deveaux, 1179.

values.<sup>114</sup> Spigelman noted:

Their history became a cult, as sacred, as reverend, as undeniable as Catholicism itself. Acadian behavior in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries was to be explained by the occurrences of a century previous.<sup>115</sup>

The geographical environment provided the isolation sought by the Acadians of Chéticamp as a result of a history of persecution by the English. It was this insularity that accounted for the Acadians' conservation of their traditional way of life which they brought from Acadie. The French language (Acadian dialect), the Catholic religion, and the working of farms were characteristics basic to the lives of the early Acadians of Chéticamp. Each of these was threatened in the late nineteenth century. The French language and the Catholic religion have survived and still flourish in Chéticamp, but farming has been almost completely replaced by the fishing industry. The decline of farming and the domination of the fishing industry by the Jersey merchants left the Acadians with little control over their livelihood until they formed co-operatives and credit unions in the late 1930's.

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<sup>114</sup>Daniel MacInnes, "The Acadians: Race Memory Isolated in a Small Space", [sic] pp. 43-68.

<sup>115</sup>The Acadian Renaissance, p. 7.

Historically, the Chéticamp community has been known for its large patriarchal families, the industriousness and hospitality of its people, and the neat and thriving appearance of the area. Documented accounts endorse this view. It is probable that this situation suffered change or was threatened in the late nineteenth century due to the massive "out-migration" of the male work force which took place in Nova Scotia between 1860 and 1900.<sup>116</sup> In fact, census statistics show that the population of Chéticamp dropped from 3,142 in 1891 to 2,480 in 1901.<sup>117</sup>

In the view of some elite Acadians, these demographic changes resulted in a weakening of the Acadian culture. The Société Nationale L'Assomption was formed as a result. It was "... a measure of Acadian distinctiveness ... the most evident manifestation of this ... awareness."<sup>118</sup>

<sup>116</sup> Alan Brookes, "Out-Migration From the Maritime Provinces, 1860-1900: Some Preliminary Considerations", Acadiensis 5:2 (1976), pp. 26-55. Also M.C. MacLean, "Cape Breton Half a Century Ago", Public Affairs 2:4 (1939), p. 185. In this study a diagram shows that the population density of Cheticamp decreased from 30-49 persons/square mile in 1881 to 15-29 persons/square mile in 1931.

<sup>117</sup> Census of Canada 1891, vol. 1, p. 28; Census of Canada 1901, vol. 1, p. 48.

<sup>118</sup> Spigelman, The Acadian Renaissance, p. 434.



It was, in effect, a "revitalization movement".<sup>119</sup> It should be stressed that participation in the society was mainly on the level of priests and teachers, and tended to center in places that had institutions of higher education, such as St. Ann's, Nova Scotia; Moncton, New Brunswick; and Arichat, the largest community on Isle Madame, Cape Breton.<sup>120</sup> The Acadians of Arichat displayed their cultural awareness by holding the fourth convention of the Société L'Assomption in 1900.

On the other hand, Chéticamp, a geographically isolated and relatively small community, was not significant in the thrust of the Société. Bernie LeVert stated that he remembered from his youth, in the 1940's, a small minority of "Assomptionistes" who concerned themselves with education in the Chéticamp community. For the most part, however, the ordinary Chéticantins were unaffected by the Société. This he attributed in part, to the remoteness of the area.<sup>121</sup>

<sup>119</sup> A.A. Wallace defines a revitalization movement as "a deliberate, organized, conscious effort by members of a society to construct a more satisfying culture". "Revitalization Movements", American Anthropologist, vol. 58 (1956), p. 265.

<sup>120</sup> The beginning of the present St. Francis Xavier University, a college had been built at Arichat in 1853. It was used extensively by the Acadians of the area and promoted the importance of Arichat as an Acadian community.

<sup>121</sup> Conversation, January 1980.

For Chéticamp, the problems of maintaining social values and material standards during this time of apparent threat had to be resolved by the people of Chéticamp in ways which were not formally organized.

In Chéticamp between the 1870's and the 1930's, the lifestyles, personal characteristics, and behaviour of certain persons resulted in the belief that these people were involved in the practice of "sorcerie". Although the sorcerers were usually believed to play a malicious role, they also enjoyed some measure of acceptance in the community. These ambivalent attitudes were prompted by some of the economic needs and social values of the Chéticantins. Indeed, for those accused of practising sorcery there were social and material benefits to be gained from this status. In most cases, the sorcièrs seemed to consciously contribute to the belief that they had some magical power.

This chapter examines one prominent group of sorcerers, the Jersey-Huguenots, and three individual sorcerers who are particularly remembered in Chéticamp. A limited amount of information is also given about others who were apparently involved in the practise of sorcery. "Static" and "dynamic" views of these sorcerers will enable their roles to be considered in the context of the community.<sup>1</sup> While the static information such as that in family, church, and business records is limited, it does establish

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<sup>1</sup> The terms "static" and "dynamic" were suggested by E.D. Ives to refer to documented "factual" information, and to information passed through oral tradition respectively. Paper given at Oral History Conference, Truro, Nova Scotia, October 1979.

the existence of these people as historical individuals. Dynamic information found in oral tradition represents the selective folk memory of notable aspects of the characteristics and behaviour, of these sorciers.

### The Jersey-Huguenots

The group most commonly believed to have practised sorcery in Chéticamp were the Jersey-Huguenots who came to work for the Robin-Jones Company. The men working for the Robin Company were not allowed to marry or to settle permanently while they were with the company, without special permission. The reason for this policy<sup>2</sup> was that the company was responsible for the welfare of its employees who were travelling a great deal of the time. One of the descendants of the Jerseymen stated that his father first came to America to work for the Robin Company at the age of sixteen or seventeen. One of the rules he had to follow was to be indoors by ten o'clock every night.<sup>3</sup> Bert LeBoutillier commented upon the effect of these rules upon the young men:

One thing, the way I see it, is that a lot of them were young fellows . . . and they were full of devilment. And I often heard my Pa-- Father

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<sup>2</sup> Given by Bert LeBoutillier, 1163. Also M. Syvret, "Jersey Settlement in Gaspé".

<sup>3</sup> Bert LeBoutillier, 1163.

telling about some came from the city. They used to call them "townies" as compared with the country people. And they were full of hellery and they'd-- the people being naturally superstitious-- .<sup>4</sup>

Among their tricks to "let off steam"<sup>5</sup> was to dress up as "ghosts" (or creatures which might be considered sorciers) in order to frighten anyone who might be outside at nighttime. To the same end, they would place dried fish heads on fence posts. The phosphoric elements in these caused them to glow at night. In one instance the glowing fish heads frightened a man so badly that he ran away, tripping over a resting cow. He considered the cow to be another manifestation of sorcery.<sup>6</sup>

Bert LeBoutillier said of the Jerseymen's reaction to the accusations of sorcery: "So they played on this. And they weren't averse to build up stories and so forth".<sup>7</sup> It was obviously to the Jerseymen's benefit to maintain the economic status-quo by inciting fear which kept the Acadians "in line" for years.<sup>8</sup> J.J. Deveau said:

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<sup>4</sup> 1163.

<sup>5</sup> Bert LeBoutillier, 1163.

<sup>6</sup> Bert LeBoutillier, 1163.

<sup>7</sup> 1163.

<sup>8</sup> Gladys Marie Fry uses a similar theme in Night Riders in Black Folk History (University of Tenn. Press, 1975). She tells of the white plantation owners' "manipulation" of the Black slaves' beliefs in conjuring, witches and ghosts, in order to maintain control over them. Sp. Chap. 2: "The Role of the Master and Overseer in the Use of Supernatural Subterfuge", pp. 59-81.

... the people from Jersey Island, they had the business in Chéticamp . . . was buying the fish and everything from the people. That's why the people were afraid of them. And if somebody say a word of them, he was saying-- scare him--<sup>9</sup>

Similarly Lionel Aucoin said:

... they own most of the corporated outfit out here-- You got to depend on them. And you're afraid if you say, "Get out of my house!" Well they say, "Well, I'll put a curse on you!" And that's it. "You're going to starve next winter" or something.<sup>10</sup>

Denise Deveaux recalled that sorcery in the form of les feux-follets was used by the Jerseymen to try to keep the men from fishing:

I remember my father was telling us that. He used to fish, eh? And they'd get up right early in the morning to go fishing. Maybe four o'clock in the morning, something like that. And some sorcier would try to scare them. They used to see fire maybe a mile ahead of them and something like that. Big pots with fire in it. And they would get there, there was nothing. That was only to scare them, to see what they were going to do. To see if they were go ahead or . . . But they didn't used to be scared. They know it was the sorcier who was trying to scare them. They didn't want them to go fishing. They must have been, I don't know, must have been "Jersais". I remember my father saying that there was some fellows from down Chéticamp [Village] there who was doing things like that. And they were pretty sure of who they were. And they'll be trying to scare them with things like that.<sup>10a</sup>

The taunting forms of sorcery manifestations attributed to the Jerseymen, such as the feux-follets, were symbolic of the relationship between the "Jersais" and the Acadians.

<sup>9</sup> Beaton Institute, tape, 1194.

<sup>10</sup> Beaton Institute, tape 1176.

<sup>10a</sup> 1166. W.D. Hand classification, 1765.



It reminded the Acadian man of the futility of his rage against the stronger economic group who controlled his life. Subservience to the Jersey men made a mockery of the physical strength of the Acadian man, and the sexual seduction of some of the Acadian women by the Jersey men was a further affront.

It would seem that these factors could have warranted outright animosity toward the Jersey men. However, the Acadians needed the economic benefits handed out by the Robin-Jones Company. Although the situation was highly unsatisfactory and damaging to their pride, there was nothing with which to replace it as far as income was concerned. In the case of the seduction of the Acadian women, it was difficult to condemn the Jersey men for their actions without admitting that the women were at fault as well. In the face of this ambiguity, the Acadians resorted to accusing the Jersey men of sorcery.

#### Gabriel à Goduc

Of all the people who did harm with sorcery, Gabriel Deveau was the best known and the most frequently mentioned. A native of Chéticamp and an Acadian, he was known as Gabriel "à Goduc", after his father, Edward "Goduc". This type of nicknaming, called "subourchais" by the Acadians, was and is commonly used in Chéticamp where there are many people with the same surname. Most people, when questioned about the name "Goduc", said that they

did not know what it meant, or that it was "just a nickname". Father Charles Aucoin offered a story of explanation. One day at fishing, the supply of fish hooks became depleted. Edward Deveau managed to devise an effective hook from a pin of some sort. The "Versais" merchant at the wharf commented in praise, "That's a good hook, Edward." The Acadians having limited English, took up the congratulatory expression, "Goduc". Thus Edward Deveau had acquired a nickname. To this day, descendants of Edward Deveau are known as "à Goduc".<sup>11</sup>

The church records of the parish of Chéticamp, being incomplete, it is possible only to guess at the date of birth of Gabriel à Goduc. The records do show that he married Julie Coste, an Acadian native of Chéticamp, in 1874; therefore, he may have been born some fifteen to twenty years earlier. One person<sup>12</sup> said that he looked about sixty years old in 1922, making the date of his birth around 1860. Gabriel and Julie Deveau had three children, born 1874, 1877, and 1891. They lived at La Prairie, on the "back of the mountain", near the present entrance to the Cape Breton Highlands National Park.

Joseph A. Deveau, the grandson of Gabriel's brother,

<sup>11</sup> Conversation, November 1978.

<sup>12</sup> Joseph A. Deveau, 1179.

remembered that Gabriel was dark like an Indian, and short and stout.<sup>13</sup> Father Charles Aucoin remembered his physical appearance as short but not stout.<sup>14</sup> Every informant, in describing Gabriel, said that he was always "saying his beads" (reciting the Rosary) everywhere he went. Joseph A. Deveaux speculated on his granduncle's reasons for praying in this fashion:

Deveaux: . . . and his Rosary in his hand, go.

Planetta: Why did he do that?

Deveaux: I don't know-- pretend he is a holy man, is no harm to nobody, maybe. Like today, people go to church and they're not out of church and they crucified you.<sup>15</sup>

In answer to the same question, Marie Deveaux scornfully replied that he was pretending to be a good Catholic.<sup>16</sup> Remembering her childhood impressions of Gabriel, Henrietta Aucoin said:

We saw him passing on the road. And we were so scared of him. And he was always with . . . prayer beads in his hands. He always had that in his hand.<sup>17</sup>

Although one informant had stated in a general discussion of sorcerers that they are unable to pray,

<sup>13</sup> 1179.

<sup>14</sup> Conversation, November 1978.

<sup>15</sup> 1179.

<sup>16</sup> Conversation, August 1978.

<sup>17</sup> Beaton Institute, 1146.

that they "get all the prayers all mixed up",<sup>18</sup> no one seemed to think that Gabriel was saying his prayers backward, or in any way garbled. Nor did anyone think that Gabriel's praying had anything to do with his sorcery. It simply made him appear identifiably strange in the eyes of the community.

Gabriel à Goduc's only means of livelihood appeared to be selling baskets which he made. Joseph A. Deveau recalled that the baskets were "not fancy like the ones the Indians made, but ordinary, for potatoes".<sup>19</sup> In a previous transcription, Marie Deveau describes her anger at Gabriel for trying to collect orders for these baskets on Sunday while her husband was at church.<sup>20</sup> Apparently, Gabriel could not make sufficient income at selling baskets at fifty or sixty cents each.<sup>21</sup> Furthermore, this occupation was not seen as valid "work" by the community: "He didn't do farming, fishing or lumbering, like everyone else . . . Bum, like, in a way."<sup>22</sup> Henrietta Aucoin said,

<sup>18</sup>Ulysses LeLièvre, 1146. Also Philip Mayer, "Witches", Witchcraft and Sorcery ed. Max Marwick (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin, 1970), p. 48.

<sup>19</sup>1179.

<sup>20</sup>1166.

<sup>21</sup>Joseph A. Deveau, 1179.

<sup>22</sup>Joseph A. Deveau, 1179.

"He didn't work, nothing."<sup>23</sup> His shiftlessness was commented upon by other informants including J.J. and Denise Deveaux.<sup>24</sup>

In effect, Gabriel used sorcery as a means of survival. He wandered around the community begging or demanding food at various houses, especially when he knew that the men were not at home. If, for any reason, he was refused, he would utter a threat, and sometime later, the effects of his sorcery seemed to attack that household.<sup>25</sup> Henrietta Aucoin related her mother's recollections of Gabriel:

I remember my mother always said . . . Have you heard about Gabriel? The one. He was supposed

<sup>23</sup> 1146.

<sup>24</sup> Beaton Institute, tape, 1144.

<sup>25</sup> Reports of a similar practise of extortion by witches or sorcerers in south-western Nova Scotia were collected by Helen Creighton in Bluenose Magic, p. 54. Lauraine Léger found similar beliefs about Indians among Acadians in New Brunswick, Les Sanctions Populaires en Acadie: Région du Comté de Kent, pp. 135-149. Further examples of these are found in the Centre d'études acadiennes, according to Ronald Labelle, correspondence, January 1980. In Chéticamp, Denise Deveaux expressed a fear of Indians who sold baskets, but no stories about Indian involvement in sorcery were encountered. According to Peter Narváez, Folklore Department, Memorial University of Newfoundland, Indians in Newfoundland often have used threats in order to sell baskets, Memorial University of Newfoundland Folklore and Language Archive. M. Gelfond, "Witchcraft", in Magic, Faith and Healing, ed. Ari Kiev (New York: The Free Press, 1964), p. 64, observed that the Shona of Africa believed that refusing a request to borrow may bring sorcery from the person who has been refused.

to be a witch. He went to the place and he want something and if you didn't give him, he said, "You'll be sorry" and after that, something happened, you know.<sup>26</sup>

Denise Deveau also testified about the methods of his sorcery:

They'll ask somebody for something. That'll be the time he will put the sorceries on them. If they refused them. They'll go from house to house. Maybe they'll ask for a pound of butter or something like that. And if they don't give it to them, they'll do something.<sup>27</sup>

Some specific results of Gabriel's sorcery were recorded from Henrietta Aucoin:

My mother said he [Gabriel] went to her place and he want potatoes. And they didn't have any left so she said, "I can't give you." He said, "You'll be sorry." And the next morning she went to milk the cow. She said-- four pails of blood. And she said, in the daytime, she was dancing, the cow was dancing and everything.<sup>28</sup>

And Marie Deveau:

. . . and he [Gabriel] used to go in the house and he wanted some fat pork and some meat . . . She said, "I have none to give you", and he said, "You'll regret it." And the next week she couldn't make her butter.<sup>29</sup>

Gabriel à Goduc was known to insist upon certain kinds of food, not just the ordinary fare of the Acadians.

<sup>26</sup> 1146.

<sup>27</sup> 1144.

<sup>28</sup> 1146.

<sup>29</sup> 1166. Hand, 7537.

Marie Deveau observed that he could be expected to refuse salt herring if it was possible to obtain meat instead.<sup>30</sup>

On the other hand, there seemed to be limits to Gabriel's power. Marie Deveau recalled an incident in which she stood up to him without suffering reprisals:

He [Gabriel] came over here. Me, I wasn't scared of him-- And he said, "Madame, you wouldn't have some bread to give me." I said, "Just wait till after I'm through with the baby and then I'll get you a nice cup of tea, and I'll get you some bread and butter." And he said, "Oh no, not like that. I ate over there-- I'm full up to here. It's bread-- bread!" I said, "I'll give you some flour, if you want to-- and you can, wife or-- can make bread. But-- I said, "I'm not going to make bread for you when you can make bread at home. I'll give you some flour." "Ah," he said [voice indicates disgust], "flour, that's going to dirty my--" I said, "Well, if the flour is dirty, well, you can-- go home! I'm not going to give you the bread." He said, "Alright, alright."<sup>31</sup>

Although, in this case, Gabriel apparently failed to exercise his powers, he was generally known to have exhibited certain characteristics which verified the magic behind his threats of sorcery. Marie Deveau told of how he could "hear" people talking about him on Fridays.<sup>32</sup> Henrietta Aucoin spoke of hearing about his peculiar early morning activity:

<sup>30</sup> See chapter, "The 'Sorcerie'", p. 99 for text of quote. 1166.

<sup>31</sup> 1166.

<sup>32</sup> 1166.



One woman there was making something<sup>33</sup> like that. Till four o'clock in the morning, she said. Getting up. She was living in the mountains. "I was getting up for my husband to go to work. He was working in the mines." And she said, "I was-- and I saw Gabriel come out on the mountain. Just in underwear, and run, and run, and run," she said. Somebody was making something for him so he had to run.<sup>34</sup>

He also seemed to have unusual strength. Joseph A.

Deveaux observed:

He would make baskets. Such a load -- was dragging on the ground. They used to call him "witchcraft" for all the power he had, an old man like that to do what he was doing.<sup>35</sup>

Joseph A. Deveaux personally knew that his grandfather's brother was a sorcier because of an incident which happened to him when he was a young man. He was missing a fine pipe of which he was rather proud. He believed that Gabriel had stolen it, and when he went to see him, he saw the old man sitting in the window smoking the pipe. When he entered the house, he found that Gabriel had made the pipe disappear. In this way for Joseph A. Deveaux, Gabriel's sorcery was confirmed.<sup>36</sup>

Gabriel à Goduc's family was disapproving of his activities. "The family didn't like it at all. Because

<sup>33</sup> In the chapter "The 'Sorcerie'", p. 114, we will see that the words "making something" refer to counter-sorcery.

<sup>34</sup> 1146.

<sup>35</sup> 1179.

<sup>36</sup> 1179.

it caused disturbance-- in front of people."<sup>37</sup> Furthermore, Gabriel was avoided by his family. They seldom visited him, although visiting was common among the other members of the family. Joseph A. Deveau said that he "never" went to Gabriel's place; instead, he would visit his grandfather and grandmother.

Asked if the community viewed his grandfather in the same light as Gabriel, Joseph A. Deveau said:

No, no! My grandfather was a quiet old man. Hard working man. Fishing industry and the farming industry. He was short and his neck was about that wide [gesture, indicating a life of hard work].<sup>38</sup>

Gabriel à Goduc did not seem to mind being thought a sorcier. Besides helping to ensure that his demands for food in the community would be met, the belief tended to give him confidence in his dealings with the members of the community. Joseph A. Deveau said:

He was easy to get along with. But you couldn't buck him much. Because he knew that people were fright of him. For that cause, you know-- He didn't mind being called a sorcier. He was warning, "Who ever touch my family--".<sup>39</sup>

No official action was ever taken against Gabriel for his sorcery, nor did the local priest ever admonish him.

<sup>37</sup> Joseph A. Deveau, 1179.

<sup>38</sup> 1179.

<sup>39</sup> 1179.

for his actions.<sup>40</sup> However, most of the community felt that Gabriel met his death (in 1933) as a result of a ritual used to punish him for causing harm by sorcery.<sup>41</sup>

Gabriel à Goduc transgressed some of the basic tenets of community life by being shiftless and by not providing for his family. Not only did he represent the antithesis of all that was expected of the head of the family, but he also tested the community in other areas of expectation. When he went begging or demanding food from the houses in the community, he indicated which ones had sufficient resources to warrant hospitality. When a woman was unable to give to Gabriel, the family or farm had to suffer the results of his sorcery.

Gabriel à Goduc exhibited the most despicable characteristics and his idiosyncrasies were well known. He was openly feared, disliked and criticised. Yet, because he was an Acadian and one of the Chéticamp community, he was never really thrown out of a Chéticamp home, or banished from the community. The community solidarity, so important to the Chéticamp people, could not allow them to reject one of their own. Even the most unacceptable had to be tolerated.

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<sup>40</sup> Joseph A. Deveau, 1179.

<sup>41</sup> Versions of this account, in which a sick hen was cooked alive causing Gabriel to die of burns, are given in the chapter "The Sorcerie", p. 125-126.

### Lazare Lizotte

Among those who were thought to practise sorcery in Chéticamp, several people had roots in the Magdalen Islands. Besides the Jersey-Huguenots, they were the only outside cultural group to become a permanent part of the otherwise closed community of Chéticamp. Like the Chéticamp Acadians, the Magdalen Islanders were Catholic and spoke French.<sup>42</sup> This enabled them to become, to a limited extent, part of the community. However, their status as outsiders helps to explain why they, like the Jersey men, were often thought to practise "sorcerie".

The most famous sorcerer from the Magdalen Islands was Lazare Lizotte. Because of the Island's affiliation with the province of Québec, he was known as "le Canadien". Lizotte was a tinker who travelled about the Chéticamp area fixing pots for a small fee, and sometimes for room and board. Sometimes he intimidated persons into giving him work which was not really necessary. Ulysses LeLièvre recalled: "There was a travelling pot-fixer. He was suspected of being a witch."<sup>43</sup> J.J. Chiasson said:

I know there was another fellow. He used to go around fixing things with tin-- or kettle and

<sup>42</sup> Their French was different from the Acadian dialect spoken by the Chéticantins. Joseph A. Deveau said that their speech was similar to that spoken by the people of St. Pierre et Miquelon. 1179.

<sup>43</sup> 1146.

he was supposed to be one of them. I remember one time, a fellow-- came to our place. And my father was scared of these fellows, you know. And he gave him some work that he really didn't need to do.<sup>44</sup>

The same pot-fixer is the sorcier in a story given by Marie Deveaux in which she recounts that the tinker placed a spell on one of her father-in-law's cows. Her father-in-law, on the advice of George LeBrun, put some pins in a bottle with the sick cow's urine. The tinker, who was supposedly staying overnight at a neighbour's house, came to the Deveaux house in the middle of the night, in great pain, begging for baking soda. Deveaux gave him some soda and the cow was cured next day.<sup>45</sup>

Anselme Chiasson has also recorded several stories about this man and his sorcery. One was a variant of that recounted by Marie Deveaux.<sup>46</sup> The other story tells how le Canadien cast a spell on a man named Marcellin, causing him to make shavings of wooden objects in his house with his pocket knife - logs, bed-boards, chairs, etc. Marcellin then began to see large dogs coming to the house. He avoided the Holy Water that his friends used to try to rid him of the spell. Finally, a man

<sup>44</sup> 1157.

<sup>45</sup> Text given in Appendix A. 1166. Hand, 5689.

<sup>46</sup> Chéticamp, p. 260.

named Gaudet identified the sorcier as le Canadien and thus delivered Marcellin of the spell.<sup>47</sup>

Le Canadien was, first of all, regarded as an outsider, though not as a stranger, for he had travelled in the area year after year. His itinerant existence, far removed from the home and family orientation of the Chéticamp people, may have stirred disapproval in the community. Yet because he offered a needed service, and probably because he brought news from other places, he was not turned away when he came on his pot-mending rounds. More likely, fear and a commitment to hospitality were factors which allowed a known sorcier to be accommodated by the people of Chéticamp.

### Sorcières

Women, in general, were not accused of practising sorcery, because as homemakers, "the women didn't have too much to do with people . . ."<sup>48</sup> However, a woman from Cap Rouge, the wife of a "Little John", appeared to have certain harmful powers. She put a spell on her husband which caused him to become very "nervous". In retaliation, he performed a ritual which killed her.<sup>49</sup>

<sup>47</sup>Chéticamp, p. 260.

<sup>48</sup>J.J. Deveau, 1144.

<sup>49</sup>Detailed account given in chapter "The 'Sorcerie'".

The wife of Gabriel à Goduc, Julie "La Loutre" (The Otter) was thought to be involved in the practise of sorcery as well. Joseph A. Deveaux, who never saw his granduncle's wife said, ". . . people say she was worse than him".<sup>50</sup> He related that she used the same methods as her husband in her begging about the community:

His missus was the same vicious person too. They claimed they were, you know. His missus was worse than him, to fight people, to get what she wanted. Grub--<sup>51</sup>

J.J. Chiasson recalled, "Gabriel Deveaux, I knew him. His wife was supposed to be able to put you to this queer idea . . ."<sup>52</sup> Others knew only that there was a woman sorcerer living in the mountains, but they did not identify her with Gabriel:

They didn't know who it was, no-- They say she was living in the mountains-- My father, going on with the cows-- a woman lived in the mountains . . .<sup>53</sup>

Julie La Loutre found occasional employment by doing housework for mothers who were confined after giving birth. While she was doing this work for a certain woman, it was discovered how she was able to do her sorcery. When she

<sup>50</sup> 1179.

<sup>51</sup> 1179.

<sup>52</sup> 1157.

<sup>53</sup> Denise Deveaux, 1166.



went upstairs to rest for a short time in the afternoons, a fly would crawl into her mouth while she slept. Her observers felt that she was able to cast spells during this time. Once, when she heard a group of women discussing her sorcery, Julie La Loutre threatened one of them: "If you talk about me, you will not sleep with your husband."<sup>54</sup>

Some people believe that Julie La Loutre met her death as a result of counter-sorcery. She died mysteriously in Glace Bay, while visiting her daughter. She was found face down in the street, with her face blue, as though she had been choked. It was suspected that someone who had been affected by her sorcery was able to choke her through some kind of ritual.<sup>55</sup>

Another example of a sorcière was a woman who was remembered only as la femme de Gillis.<sup>56</sup> In an account recorded in Acadian dialect, she was refused something at her neighbour's house. In retaliation, she cast a spell causing that neighbour to have difficulty in making butter.<sup>57</sup> In this case, unlike that of Julie La Loutre, there is no evidence that Mrs. Gillis' husband was also involved in sorcery.

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<sup>54</sup> Marie Deveaux, 1166.

<sup>55</sup> Marie Deveaux, 1166.

<sup>56</sup> The name Gillis is not found in Chéticamp. It is possible that this woman was an Acadian who married a Gillis from Margaree.

<sup>57</sup> Centre d'études acadiennes, Bob.1, No. 8, coll. Jules Chiasson, Inf. Francis LeVert.

George LeBrun

There was one Jerseyman who was known to have the power to deliver people who were victimized by sorcery. He was also thought by a very few to be a practitioner of malicious sorcery as well. This was the well-known businessman George LeBrun, who died in Chéticamp in 1942. Many said that "he knew what to do because he was one of them."

Born in Trinity Parish, Jersey, in 1858, George LeBrun began to work for the Robin Company in North America when he was seventeen or eighteen years old.<sup>58</sup> His work included travelling by boat from Chéticamp to Arichat, along the coast, buying fish for the Robin Company. This he did during the summer months, returning to Jersey for the winter.

In 1875, with the permission of the Robin Company, he married Mary Anne Billot of St. Clement's Parish in Jersey. The next year, he became the first Jerseyman to spend the winter and to settle permanently in Chéticamp. On the main street of Chéticamp he built a large house, the only one of its style in Chéticamp (see photograph), and raised a family of four girls and one boy.

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<sup>58</sup> Unless otherwise indicated, all information on George LeBrun was received from his grandson, Bert LeBoutillier. Dates of birth, marriage and death were confirmed by the LeBoutillier family Bible.



The home of George LeBrun, Cheticamp.

George LeBrun was involved in several business ventures after he left the Robin Company in 1910. Included among these were two stores, one of which was located at La Pointe, on the Island which had been granted to the Jerseymen for their use. Much later he operated a small general store, selling everything "from a needle to an anchor"<sup>59</sup> in his own home. He also started a lobster processing factory at La Pointe. The Acadian employees of this plant were housed at LeBrun's home. George LeBrun was considered to have been wealthy by the people of Chéticamp, but no one seemed sure how he had acquired this wealth. Two informants stated that his family owned the bank in Chéticamp.<sup>60</sup> This was believed because the Royal Bank of Canada used space in his house, and because at least one member of his family worked in the bank.<sup>61</sup> Another commented that, "I don't know where he got all his money".<sup>62</sup> In reality, George LeBrun suffered several serious financial setbacks during his life. These were due to the up-keep of an extravagant home and to the problems of the extensive credit system which was the downfall of many Jersey businessmen. Rental received from his

<sup>59</sup>Bert LeBoutillier, conversation, November 1978.

<sup>60</sup>Lionel Aucoin, 1146 and Joseph A. Deveau, 1179.

<sup>61</sup>Information supplied by Hilda Day, conversation, December 1978.

<sup>62</sup>J.J. Deveau, 1194.

lands in Jersey maintained him, in the later years of his life when he had no apparent means of livelihood.

It was implied by Bert LeBoutillier that competition from Father Fiset, pastor at Chéticamp (1875-1909), impeded George LeBrun's success. Father Fiset, a native of Quebec, owned and operated a farm, a large general store, as well as the post office. He was "quite a businessman".<sup>63</sup> His brother practised medicine in Chéticamp and was possibly part of the family business. Bert LeBoutillier suggested that Father Fiset used his position as pastor to discourage the Chéticamp people from patronizing the LeBrun business. In one instance, he ordered a canal built across the narrow stretch of land connecting the Island to the rest of Chéticamp. This would have hampered trade between the Jerseymen and the Chéticamp people. As the foreman of the job said, it would "cut all the Versais adrift".<sup>64</sup> George LeBrun threatened to charge Father Fiset with "cutting and interfering with the King's highway",<sup>65</sup> and the work was discontinued.

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<sup>63</sup> Bert LeBoutillier, conversation, November 1978. Also, Daniel MacInnes, "The Acadians: Race Memory Isolated in Small Space".[ sic], pp. 63-64.

<sup>64</sup> Bert LeBoutillier, 1163.

<sup>65</sup> Bert LeBoutillier, 1163.

A further conflict was initiated by Father Fiset who told his parishioners not to seek the help of a certain Dr. William LeBlanc whose medical practice competed with that of Father Fiset's brother. According to Bert LeBoutillier, the conflict was based on religious principles; LeBlanc was a reader of the Bible and was therefore closely associated with the non-Catholic element of the community -- the Jersey-Huguenots. In describing the community's attitude toward non-Catholics, Lionel Aucoin explained:

Actually here, everybody is Catholic here. And you know, in the old days, if you're not a Catholic you're not living. You're not no part of society whatever.<sup>66</sup>

Bert LeBoutillier added:

There was always that little barrier. We were Protestants. And the attitude from the Church was to stay away from Protestants, you know. Not to be contaminated, so to say.<sup>67</sup>

George LeBrun was a short man, about five feet, four inches in height, and was of slight build. In his later years he wore a short white beard.

He was good living man. I suppose, like all of us he had his faults. Kind hearted and very jolly, very charming fellow. He'd meet anybody and even if it was raining he'd say, "Nice day!" He'd say, "Belle Journée, belle journée!" He'd say in French.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> 1146.

<sup>67</sup> 1163.

<sup>68</sup> Bert LeBoutillier, 1163. Also J.J. and Denise Deveaux noted that he was "always" sitting in front of his house greeting people who went by. 1194.

George LeBrun had a great love of horses and had this one point in common with Father Fiset's successor, Father LeBlanc. They often discussed their horses, and raced them on the ice on the harbour. A self-taught veterinarian, he often rendered assistance to farmers who had sick animals. At times, sorcery was implicated in an animal's illness, and LeBrun was involved in ridding the animal of the spell.

He also contributed to the health of the community by practising dentistry with a notable amount of skill. Joseph A. Deveau noted that he would pull teeth so painlessly that the patient was not aware of losing the tooth. "He was right slick at it, boy!"<sup>69</sup>

George LeBrun was greatly respected because he was "well-educated and could defend himself in anything".<sup>70</sup> People went to him to have letters written, and to "get things straightened out about land, taxes, or roads, or something like that . . . He'd help anybody".<sup>71</sup> Bert LeBoutillier suggested that, because of this, he was seen apart from the other "Jersais", who were disliked and avoided by the people of Chéticamp.

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<sup>69</sup>1179.

<sup>70</sup>Bert LeBoutillier, 1163.

<sup>71</sup>Bert LeBoutillier, 1163.



Because he was devoted to the reading of the Bible, and possibly because of his activities as a Freemason, many people thought that he was a minister, although his exact religious status was vague. Lionel Aucoin said about George LeBrun:

[He] was supposed to be a minister, a Baptist minister or something like that, wasn't he? He had a church out there in Point Cross, right?<sup>72</sup>

It was mistakenly believed by some Acadians that the Jersey church at "The Farm" was built by George LeBrun.<sup>73</sup> The shortage of Anglican ministers, necessitating visits by ministers of other denominations, may account for the lack of clarity about the faith represented by LeBrun.

Although, according to Bert LeBoutillier, LeBrun never tried to influence people away from the Catholic Church, it was his use of the Bible in his dealings with the people of Cheticamp that made them think that he was a minister of some sort.

They'd come and he'd listen to them. He always pictured them-- of course, in their minds sorcery was something vile and wicked. And something always bad. So the opposite of bad is good. Which would be for him to come from the Bible. Or in some cases he'd tell them to go to church and say certain prayers, or do certain things. And this was where the Bible stories come in. He'd give them Bibles and give them certain passages to read. And study the Bible. And they'd read it if they could read. Or if they couldn't read,

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<sup>72</sup> 1146.

<sup>73</sup> Henrietta Aucoin, 1146.

they'd say certain prayers. The Bibles were usually in French.<sup>74</sup>

According to Bert LeBoutillier, George LeBrun did not really believe in sorcery, but his involvement was rationalized in this way:

And they'd ask him to send out the bad spirits, sort of thing, you know. . . . He had enough psychology in his thinking to know if you told a person, [you're] "crazy, believing in that", right away they'd turn against you. They wouldn't even speak to him about it. So he encouraged them to speak to him about their problem.<sup>75</sup>

George LeBrun apparently appreciated the community's trust in him and he took steps to make sure that it continued. Bert LeBoutillier told how his grandfather advised the father of a victim of sorcery in the performance of a ritual which was designed to identify the sorcier. The story suggests that George LeBrun's involvement may have been more than a mere humouring of the beliefs of Chéticamp people and that he himself may have believed that he had special powers.

In one instance, I remember them telling me. They told me the names of the people and I don't remember who they are. There was one fellow came and I think it was his daughter had some kind of-- was reacting in a certain way. And he was sure this spell had been put on her. So there was always the thing that you had to recognize who was putting the spell. And if he recognizes, well, he could take his defence against that person. So he came to see Grandfather. And he asked all about it. And he

<sup>74</sup> Bert LeBoutillier, 1163. Hand, 5578.

<sup>75</sup> Bert LeBoutillier, 1163.

spoke to him and he explained him all about it. In some cases, by the way, he would also suggest them to take treatment from the doctor, you know. This would come into it. Because in some cases the child could be sick, really sick, you know. And they'd think it was sorcery and they'd do all kind of hocus pocus stuff which was not doing anything for the child. If he thought it was anything serious he'd tell them. But just also to tell the person to get rid of this spell-- And in this case he told them to take a five gallon pail-- was it five gallon? And this was to find out who was putting the spell. And take a red hot iron-- And there's two what they call "ears" where the hoop that supports the pail is fixed into the pail. And right below these ears, around what would be the "neck", you know, is make a searing of the pail around that. And he gave him certain prayers that he had to say. He did this, and then for the next couple of days he was to watch who would come out obviously with a burn on his neck. And they came back. They said, "Oh yes, so and so, we saw him with his-- I don't know if he had a scarf or something around his neck. He had hurt his neck. At least he said it was hurt. But this was it. But that was, they found out, to their mind or way of thinking, they found out who put the spell. Yeah-- possibly this isn't-- not true at all. But . . . satisfied the person. And it also brought in that he was reading the Bible. And he had to say these prayers. And he had to do certain things to-- exorcise this bad spirit out of this person. And get this spell. The spell is generally caused by bad spirits.<sup>76</sup>

The information received from the Cheticamp Acadians about deliverance from sorcery differs significantly from the above story. Although they describe in similar details, the "magic ritual" recommended by George LeBrun, not one made any reference to Bible readings, certain prayers, or any other religious connection. The significance of his religious activities is difficult to assess considering

the lack of reference to this on the part of the Acadians. However, it may be said that the uncertainty of his religious role and the vagueness of his source of wealth contributed to an "air of mystery" about him.

In almost every reference to George LeBrun, it appeared that he was well-respected, and that his involvement in sorcery was limited to delivering people from its effects. Futile attempts were made to confirm the testimony of two informants<sup>77</sup> that he occasionally practised sorcery in a malicious way. In answer to the question, "Were people ever afraid of George LeBrun?", Marie Deveau provided a typical answer: "No! Not George LeBrun! He helped. He knew what to do."<sup>78</sup> There was the same lack of accusation in trying to confirm Father Aucoin's statement that George LeBrun sired a number of illegitimate children around Cheticamp. The only person to give similar information was J.J. Chiasson, now a resident of Sydney.<sup>79</sup> In the latter instance, community embarrassment, rather than lack of knowledge may have been a factor in the reluctance to give such information.

Despite the respect for George LeBrun, there were still reservations about him. His grandson attempted to define the situation:

<sup>77</sup> who would prefer not to be named.

<sup>78</sup> 1166.

<sup>79</sup> 1157.

There was always a good feeling and a friendliness. It was hard to explain the feeling that existed-- There was great respect for George LeBrun. But there was always that little barrier, though. We were protestant . . . 80

As a Jersey-Huguenot, LeBrun was "one of them" and therefore associated with powers of sorcery. Yet he was possessed of certain characteristics which were not quite within the value system of the Acadians, but which, indeed, could not be called evil. He was an individual with special skills, higher education, and seemingly great wealth. His willingness to share his legal knowledge and his veterinary and dental skills drew the Chéticamp people to him. Although he was an outsider and a member of a hated group, his generosity and friendliness meant that he was not associated with the other Jersey men in the popular mind. Furthermore, he was the first Jersey businessman to settle permanently in Chéticamp, a significant gesture. The Acadians' way of dealing with this anomalous personality was through their conviction that George LeBrun practised white magic rituals which delivered the victims from sorcery. Only occasionally, would someone focus only on George LeBrun's background, and accuse him of practising malicious sorcery.

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<sup>80</sup> Bert LeBoutillier, 1163.

### Summary

Sorcerers were often thought to have anti-social or "different" traits quite apart from their perceived sorcery.<sup>81</sup> Acadian legends about sorcery found in the Atlantic provinces confirm this view.<sup>82</sup> Many of the people thought to practise sorcery were Indians, Acadians who were hermits or agnostics, or people who were otherwise "outside" the community. Among the sorcerers were Frenchmen, Québécois, Jersey Islanders, and Englishmen, but as Ronald Labelle has suggested, sorcerers drawn from these groups were rarely people of authority.<sup>83</sup> In considering the sorciers in Chéticamp about whom information has been gathered in this study, it may be seen that the sorcerer appeared to be at variance with the values of which the community has traditionally approved.

In the context of the French-speaking and Catholic Acadian community, the Jerseyman's English language and Anglican religion appear as deviant characteristics. The Jerseyman's actions in seducing the Acadian women could also be termed deviant in a community where illegitimacy

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<sup>81</sup> Max Marwick, Sorcery in its Social Setting (Manchester University Press, 1965), p. 182.

<sup>82</sup> Collections at Centre d'études acadiennes. Ronald Labelle, correspondence, January 1980.

<sup>83</sup> Correspondence, 1980.

was rare. These factors were reinforced by the Jerseymen's economic control which limited the Acadians' ability to maintain their ideal of providing well for their large families. Gabriel à Goduc also played a deviant role in this regard; unlike the other Acadian men who were known for their hard work, he did not appear to do "real work". Moreover, the itinerant lifestyle of the tinker was a denial of the value of home life so important to the Acadian community.

The community standards of the Chéticamp people determined what actions of the sorcier would be considered deviant.<sup>84</sup> K.T. Erickson has proposed that, in the awareness of the offending behaviour, the community will "develop a tighter bond of solidarity than existed earlier",<sup>85</sup> and create "a machinery of control in order to protect itself from the harmful effects of the deviance".<sup>86</sup> In the case of Chéticamp, the machinery of control used was to stigmatize the person or group as practitioners of sorcery.

In spite of community attitudes, the sorciers appeared to benefit practically from the accusations. The

<sup>84</sup> K.T. Erikson, Wayward Puritans (New York: Wiley and Sons, 1966), p. 6.

<sup>85</sup> Erikson, Wayward Puritans, p. 4.

<sup>86</sup> Erikson, p. 8.



Jerseymen, Gabriel à Goduc, and the tinker were known to have gained materially from the accusations. George LeBrun, with his white magic, seems to have gained socially as well.

In general, the people of Chéticamp appeared to tolerate the presence of the sorciers and to grant them agreed-upon roles in their society. Nevertheless they viewed the sorciers as sinister and deviant individuals who could be punished through counter-sorcery. This ambiguous relationship between the Chéticantins and the sorciers seems to have been based mainly upon the community's material needs and its social values.

Sorcery touched the lives of many families and individuals in Chéticamp during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Narratives about the sorcery in Chéticamp reveal that certain areas of community life were repeatedly affected by the malicious intent of certain individuals. Often the result of an affront to a sorcier, the sorcery acted to disrupt the livelihood or to harm the health of the Chéticantins or to produce fear in other ways.

Usually the folk categories<sup>1</sup> "sorcery" or "sorcerie" were used to describe the happenings in Chéticamp. Very occasionally "witchcraft" or "witch" were used in the accounts but in this study no attempt will be made to apply the anthropological distinctions between sorcery and witchcraft.<sup>2</sup> Nevertheless, manifestations such as shape-changing and "possession" lead to discussion of the source of power for the sorciers.

The second part of this chapter will deal with the

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<sup>1</sup>G.J. Casey, Neil Rosenberg, and W.W. Wareham, "Repertoire Categorization and Performer-Audience Relationships: Some Newfoundland Folksong Examples", Ethnomusicology 16 (1972), pp. 397-403.

<sup>2</sup>Anthropologically defined, "a sorcerer achieves his evil ends by magic [specific ritual]"; "a witch achieves [his] by some magical power inherent in [his] personality, a power that does not require the help of magic", found in Max Marwick, "Introduction", Witchcraft and Sorcery, ed. Marwick (Harmondsworth, Middlesex; Penguin, 1970), p. 12.

responses of the Chéticantins to the "sorcerie". The conducting of rituals and the use of direct action against the supposed sorciers appeared to be effective against their powers. The efficaciousness of these actions was sometimes extreme but was usually considered justified by the community.

### Sorcery and Livelihood

In Chéticamp, farm management appeared to be the main target of the "sorcerie", although activities related to fishing and lumbering seemed to be affected as well.

Farm animals, especially cows, were thought to be harmed by sorcery. Several people, including the father of Denise Deveau "had experience" with the sorciers "messing up the cows".<sup>3</sup> Freddie Aucoin pointed out that damage done to a cow was the result of not complying with the demands of a sorcier: "If you don't do that [give to a sorcier] you'll go to the barn next morning and you will find a knife on each legs of the cow, or something like that."<sup>4</sup>

Henrietta Aucoin reported a specific incident in which the demands of a sorcier were refused:

I remember my mother said he [Gabriel] went to her place and he want potatoes. And they didn't have any left so she said, "I can't give you". He

<sup>3</sup> Denise Deveau, 1166. Hand, 7626.

<sup>4</sup> Beaton Institute, tape, 239.

said, "You'll be sorry". And the next morning she went to milk her cow. She said-- four pails of blood. And she said the night it was the same. And she said, in the daytime, she was dancing, the cow was dancing and everything. She had never seen something like that. So when my father went home -- it was a few days like that, he was a fisherman -- she told him that. They had to kill the cow.<sup>5</sup>

Yet the sorcery did not cease with the death of the cow:

"So it took the pig. He said the pig was dancing and everything. So they had to kill him."<sup>6</sup>

Similarly Marie Deveaux tells the story of how her father-in-law's cow was affected by sorcery: "Grandma said, she said, 'I never saw cattle like that. Never saw cow like that.' She was doing something you would never think she would do. Dancing, dancing."<sup>7</sup>

The disruption of dairy production was the most frequently reported result of sorcery in Chéticamp. It was felt that "witched milk"<sup>8</sup> could not make butter,<sup>9</sup> or that the milk would turn sour.<sup>10</sup> In reference to the sorcier's effect upon the making of butter, J.J. Chiasson recalled: "They have some there cow-- that churn the cream

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<sup>5</sup> 1146.

<sup>6</sup> Henrietta Aucoin, 1146.

<sup>7</sup> 1166.

<sup>8</sup> Ulysses LeLièvre, 1146.

<sup>9</sup> Denise Deveaux, 1166; Ulysses LeLièvre, 1146.

<sup>10</sup> Denise Deveaux, 1166.

and couldn't make butter out of it. The cream would turn kind of watery."<sup>11</sup>

As with the damage to the cows, the sorcery affecting the milk products was attributed to an affront to a sorcier.

Marie Deveaux recalled an incident:

. . . another woman, she was milking her cow-- and that was another sorcier [Gabriel]. He wanted some-- he used to go in the house and he wanted some fat pork and some meat. And-- you know, they were just going here and there. They were getting their life like that. She said, "I have none to give you", and he said, "Well, you'll regret it". And the next week she couldn't make her butter. Churn and churn and churn and churn, and no butter. It was all-- staying cream.<sup>12</sup>

Denise Deveaux, recounted her mother's experience about a sorcière who took her revenge.\*

That's what happened I think. My mother was telling us. They used to put cream in the well, eh?-- down home. And somebody went over there, over at my place and asked my mother for a pound of butter or cream or something. And she could not give it to them because they had a house full of kids. So she did something to the cream in the well. It made it right sour and everything. Imagine! It used to keep for two or three days there. So that's what they'll do if you refuse to give them something.<sup>13</sup>

In comparison to the management of the farm, the lumber and fishing industries appeared to be affected by the sorcery only indirectly and the results were much less extreme. In the research for this study, narratives concerning sorcery and the lumber industry were not found.

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<sup>11</sup>1157.

<sup>12</sup>1166.

<sup>13</sup>1166.

However, in Chéticamp: Histoire et Traditions acadiennes, Anselme Chiasson recorded an account in which a sorcier attempted to rob a Chéticantin who was delivering a boatload of lumber from Chéticamp to Halifax. In this story there is no apparent connection between the attack and the type of cargo.<sup>14</sup>

Fishing was affected insofar as the men saw manifestations of sorcery on their way to or from the fishing boats at the shore. These were strange happenings which seemed intended to frighten the men from their work.<sup>15</sup> The experience of Timothée à Thomas Chiasson, who was frightened by barrels and by fires on his way from fishing, were also recorded by Anselme Chiasson: "Le vieux Timothée . . . en revenant de la pêche par le chemin du portage à travers bois, se voyait poursuivi ou accompagné par des gros barils roulant autour de lui. D'autres fois, c'était des chaudières de feu."<sup>16</sup> Unlike the interference in the dairying procedures, the results of sorcery in the context of the fishing and lumbering did not affect the natural resources in these industries.

<sup>14</sup>Chiasson, Chéticamp, p. 261.

<sup>15</sup>Case cited by Denise Deveau in previous chapter, "The Sorciers", p. 57.

<sup>16</sup>Chiasson, Chéticamp, p. 258-259.

### Inexplicable Phenomena

The "chaudières de feu" which frightened the fishermen were commonly called the feux-follets or "pots of fire".

Denise Deveau likened this phenomenon to "an old pot, like an old-fashioned pot, and there will be fire in that. They were real special pots. They had a long handle on them."<sup>17</sup>

Lionel Aucoin described it as "something flashing like a light . . . moving as in Star Trek, the science fiction movie."<sup>18</sup>

While explaining the feux-follets as swamp gases, Ulysses LeLièvre nonetheless remembered the fear inspired by these fires:

There were stories to scare people to death. And quite a few fellows it happened to them. When they go along and the first thing they notice a bucket of fire. Full of fires around-- around him to try to scare him to death.<sup>19</sup>

Henrietta Aucoin told of how her grandfather was startled by a feu-follet which he saw in a tree by his house. He spoke to it and the feu-follet responded by chasing him back to his house.<sup>20</sup>

Most often witnessed by grown men, those likely to be abroad at nighttime, these manifestations of sorcery were especially attributed to the Jersey merchants. Henrietta

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<sup>17</sup> 1166.

<sup>18</sup> 1146.

<sup>19</sup> 1146.

<sup>20</sup> 1146.



Aucoin's story shows how the Jersey merchants used les feux-follets as a means of maintaining fear among the Acadians:

... and they all said it was the clerk at that store, the "Jersais", you know. At the Robin-Jones store. And he said, "Tonight you will be scared when you go home!" And he did. He went home when it was night and he saw the feu-follet -- fire. He said it was a can, a five-pound can, you know, in flames. And he said it was always in front of him. All the way. And he was laughing, you know. He heard him laughing, you know. So he started to be scared. So he called at your uncle's and stay there that night. He can't go home. He was too scared to go home.<sup>21</sup>

She went on to explain how the sorcier was identified:

Oh yes, and I told you about the little can, the five-pound can that was burning. And the next day he went to the store and there was one of them with pads on his ears. Because he said, "Every time that can was around me-- ". He foot [kicked] at the handles. He said, "The next morning I went to the store and there the two ears."<sup>22</sup>

In this story, it was the "ears" (the attachments for the handles) of the five-pound can that provided proof that the Jersey clerk was implicated in the feu-follet.

Minnie Aucoin told a similar story in which the sorcier was identified and punished:

Well, I heard my grandfather say there was a fellow from Cheticamp there. He was going home along the beach and one of the LeBrun tell him, "If you go home all alone you'll be scared on the road." It was nighttime you know, and he

<sup>21</sup> 1146.

<sup>22</sup> Henrietta Aucoin, 1146.

laugh about it. And there was a pot there full of fire. Right in the middle of the road. And he took a stick and turned that in the fire, you know. And the next morning that LeBrun, all his neck was all burned. That was what he told us. There was a lot of story like that.<sup>23</sup>

Other lights were thought to be les feux-follets caused by sorcery. When Father Charles Aucoin was a boy, he watched from his bedroom window in fascinated terror as fires moved about the Jersey graveyard located across the Harbour on the Island. He was later to realise that the lights were those of runrunners as they unloaded and hid their illicit cargos by night.<sup>24</sup>

The connection between les feux-follets and sorcery is a local application of this strange natural phenomenon which is also called "will-o-the-wisp" or "ignis fatuus" -- a flitting phosphorescent light found chiefly over marshy ground. In other parts of Nova Scotia, these swamp fires or "lights" have varying significance including being a fore-runner of death.<sup>25</sup> The same phenomenon has been known in Québec and instances were recorded by Richard Dorson and by Paul A.W. Wallace. Unlike the situation in

<sup>23</sup> Beaton Institute, tape, 239. It is not clear whether the person mentioned is the George LeBrun discussed in the previous chapter.

<sup>24</sup> Conversation, June 1978.

<sup>25</sup> Helen Creighton, Bluenose Ghosts (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1957), p. 19. Hand, 5764.

Chéticamp, neither of these examples indicated that the "feu-follet" had any connection with sorcery.<sup>26</sup> However, Séguin, in La Sorcellerie au Québec du XVIIe au XIXe Siècles noted a connection between sorcery and les feux-follets: a servant who was "possessed" by devils as a result of sorcery, was tormented by visions of fire called les feux-follets.<sup>27</sup>

Unnatural happenings such as might be considered the work of "ghosts" were, in Chéticamp, also attributed to sorciers. Indeed, Minnie Aucoin, in attempting to find an equivalent to the sorciers in the English language said they were like "ghosts".<sup>28</sup> Denise Deveau recalled that her husband's uncle, a moonshiner, would often hear barrels moving about in the upstairs room where he stored his liquor. He would shout at them to stop moving, and the noise would cease. It was believed that the noise was caused by some sort of sorcery.<sup>29</sup> In a story recited by

<sup>26</sup> Richard Dorson, Bloodstoppers and Bearwalkers (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1952), p. 86; Paul A.W. Wallace, Baptiste Larocque: Legends of French Canada (Toronto: Musson Book Co., 1923), p. 47. In the story collected by Dorson the "fi-follet" was a vision like a man in flames, seen by a person who had neglected his religion. According to the story collected by Wallace, a person who has neglected his religious duties may become a "fi-follet" after seven years of being an animal or loup garou.

<sup>27</sup> Séguin, La Sorcellerie au Québec (Ottawa: Leméac, 1971), pp. 1-5.

<sup>28</sup> 239

<sup>29</sup> Conversation, September 1978. Legends similar to this are found at Centre d'études acadiennes, Moncton.

Arthur Bourgeois, the sorcier manifested himself in strange footsteps that were heard all over the house. The noise seemed to be a way for the sorcier to express dissatisfaction in a frightening manner.<sup>30</sup> Denise Deveau also cited such an incident:

Deveau: I can't remember all the story about the priest. The priest really got scared that night. Because they were having dances or something. I think the priest told them not to have them and they were having them. So that night they got scared. There was something going on in the house. I don't know what it was-- ghosts or something. They all took off. And then it scared the priest too. Like chains on the top of the globe house. You hear that.  
Planetta: But were the noises really made by sorcerers?

Deveau: Well, it was some of them guys doing it. I guess maybe they weren't invited to the dance or something. They'll do that. That was Father LeBlanc [the priest who had forbidden the dance and who was frightened by the noises ]<sup>31</sup>

The culprits ("guys doing it") were the Jerseymen, most likely the young men who served as clerks in the store. Forbidden by their superiors to socialise, they were also ostracised by the young Acadians of the community.

A similar incident involving strange noises was referred to by Marie Deveau:

There were lots of people who were having all kinds of-- I know of a family not very far from my home. The girl was my best friend. Every night they used to hear some noises. "Ding-a-ling", and chains.

<sup>30</sup> Beaton Institute, tape, 1145.

<sup>31</sup> 1166.

Like hammering. I don't know if it was that man's [Gabriel's] wife who went in there. If she wanted something that the woman didn't want to give her. And she was bothered a long time and they worked.<sup>32</sup>

In seeking the meaning of unusual sights and sounds in the community, the Chéticantins added to the mystery by attributing these to sorcery.

#### Magical Transportation and Clairvoyance

Some Chéticantins believe that the Jersey sorciérs made overnight journeys to the Jersey Islands in the English Channel on horses supplied and driven by "little people" which the Acadians called "les lutins".<sup>33</sup> According to Acadian beliefs, the lutins or "elves" braid the manes of certain horses belonging to mortals, and ride these horses during the night.<sup>34</sup> Such horses were believed to have provided the "Jersais" with their magical transportation to the Channel Islands. Furthermore, it was believed that the lutins must have originated on the Jersey Islands because some of the sorciérs came from the same place.<sup>35</sup>

<sup>32</sup> 1166.

<sup>33</sup> Such statements were recorded from Ulysses LeLièvre, 1146; Henrietta Aucoin, 1146; and J.J. and Denise Deveau, 1144. Hand, 7664.

<sup>34</sup> This belief is shared by the Scottish and Micmac cultures in Nova Scotia. See Elizabeth Planetta, "Fairy Beliefs among Scottish Descendants in Nova Scotia", unpublished paper, Beaton Institute, 1978. Similar beliefs are found in Québec, according to R. Dorson, Bloodstoppers and Bearwalkers, pp. 79-80. Hand, 7663.

<sup>35</sup> Denise Deveau, 1144.

The fact that a Jerseyman was consulted about harm done to horses by the lutins<sup>36</sup> seems to further substantiate the connection between the two areas of belief. Ulysses LeLievre referred to an instance when one of his grandfather's horses was affected:

Those lutins . . . I saw that with my own eyes and in those days I didn't wear glasses. I knew damn well what was going on. That black horse was always in trouble -- couldn't lie down-- those lutins. George LeBrun was from the Jersey Island. They had some kind of "sorcerie". My grandfather was curious enough to ask him about the horses. He asked questions and looked at the horse. Old George heard the story over in England-- made some kind of wish or something. But they never seen anything of the sort later.<sup>37</sup>

The sorciers in Chéticamp appeared to have a variety of magical means of transportation. J.J. Deveaux told of a man who went on a ten mile trip with a sorcier by merely sitting on some firewood, and chatting with him:

A guy, they say, one time. It was one of those men got him to go with him one night. From Chéticamp to Margaree. The evening. At that time they had no car, nothing. He say, "Well, we'll just sit down here. Sit down on the pile of firewood." And then he was talking. In about half an hour he say, "We'd better go in." He say he looked, "We're in Margaree!" And after that he did the same thing. He went out and sat down and started to talk and went home.<sup>38</sup>

According to Marie Deveaux, the sorciers also went to the Magdalen Islands. This feat they accomplished by travelling

<sup>36</sup> According to Ulysses LeLievre, 1146, the lutins bit the horses' necks and also made them nervous.

<sup>37</sup> 1146.

<sup>38</sup> 1144.

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on barrels.<sup>39</sup>

A story about magical transportation on a pig was found in two different versions. Both of these stressed that the man who went with the Jersey sorcier on the pig was not to speak a word. In J.J. Deveau's obviously humorous version, the Chéticantin's surprised exclamation at the pig's ability to jump cut short the trip.<sup>40</sup> The other version, told by Henrietta Aucoin, states that the round trip to the Jersey Islands was completed:

People went to the Jersey Islands, sometimes on a pig. And there was one from Chéticamp who went with them one time. He was saying to us, but nobody will believe him. He said he had-- he told when he went on the pig, "Don't say a word, don't talk". Alors! And he said he went to Jersey Island and then he came back the same night.<sup>41</sup>

Another special power attributed to the sorciers was that of clairvoyance. Marie Deveau recalled an instance in which the sorcier exhibited his ability to "hear" on Fridays:

They say they "hear" on Fridays. One time I said, "I wish that Gabriel would come." We had some nice herring, but we had lots of meat. But just in spite I would say, "Gabriel, we have some nice herring. Would you like to have some?" Just to make him say, "Agh, herring!" Maybe I'd give him a little piece of fat pork, and I'd give him some herring. And two weeks later we were all at the

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<sup>39</sup> Conversation, November 1979.

<sup>40</sup> Transcription given in chapter, "The Continuity of Belief", pp. 151-152.

<sup>41</sup> 1146.



table. Bang, bang! on the door. Gabriell! He came in and he said, "Bonjour Madame, I suppose you wouldn't have some nice salt herring?" See? He heard me. Because he wouldn't have asked for herring, he would have asked for meat. I said, "I was saying the other day, Gabriel, that if you could come over, the nice herring that we have, that I'd give you some." Well! he said, I would be very glad". To punish me, that's why. Just to punish me. So I didn't give him any fat pork.<sup>42</sup>

In addition, the devinatory powers of a certain sorcier were said to have assisted in locating the body of a drowned boy:

He [the sorcier] was from Cap Rouge, but not now. He's dead now. He was living on the island. And there was one from Cap Rouge, a young boy who was drowned one day. And they cherchent for him and they can't find him. So they went to see that man. And he said, "I can tell you where he is." He was at the coast. And they had-- the coast all day for three or four days. And they were dragging the water for him, cause he was just drown in the harbour.<sup>43</sup>

While the travelling abilities and the sensory range of some of the sorciers were considered to be unnatural and cause for distrust, these special powers were sometimes utilized by the Chéticantins both for entertainment and solving difficulties.

#### Transformation and "Possession"

According to a number of Chéticantins, sorciers had the power to transform themselves into animals, especially dogs. Henrietta Aucoin told of how the sorcier Gabriel let people know that he was aware of what was being cooked

<sup>42</sup> 1166

<sup>43</sup> Henrietta Aucoin, 1146.



and eaten in the community: "Everytime . . . they put something on the stove . . . he came at the door, sometimes in a big dog or something like that. There's a knock at the door. You open the door and they're gone."<sup>44</sup> Arthur Bourgeois noted that the appearance of a black dog indicated the implication of sorcery in occurrences of other strange happenings.<sup>45</sup> Similarly, in Marie Deveaux' narrative about the sorcery done to her father-in-law's cattle by the tinker sorcier, a big black dog appeared just previous to an entrance by the tinker.<sup>46</sup> In another narrative, the sorcier assumed the form of his victim's dog. In this story, told by Jules DeBlanc, a certain Acadian employee of the Robin-Jones Company decided that he was not being paid enough by the company. He made a "fuss" and threatened the manager into paying more money. The Acadian went home and was met at the gate by his dog. The dog was acting strangely, repeatedly jumping up on his master, seeking the pocket which held the money obtained from the Jerseyman. Finally the man hit the dog on the head. The next time he saw the manager of the Robin-Jones Company, he noticed a mark on the Jerseyman's head just in the spot where he had hit

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<sup>44</sup> 1146.

<sup>45</sup> 1145. Hand, 5617.

<sup>46</sup> 1166

the dog. This proved to the man that the Jerseyman was a sorcier.<sup>47</sup>

As in Chéticamp, the appearance of a dog as an indicator of the presence of sorcery, or as a means of identifying a sorcerer, has been known in Western European belief.<sup>48</sup> Also, in Latin American countries, persons with certain supernatural and sometimes evil powers were believed to take the form of a wolf or a dog.<sup>49</sup> The term loup-garou, meaning a person who is changed to an animal as a result of evil, is used in Québec, and is found in legends collected by Séguin,<sup>50</sup> Dorson,<sup>51</sup> and Wallace.<sup>52</sup> Of these, Séguin is the only one to suggest a connection between sorcery and loup-garou. Despite apparent widespread French Canadian use

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<sup>47</sup> Conversation, April 1979.

<sup>48</sup> Barbara Allen Woods, The Devil in Dog Form: A Partial Type-Index of Devil Legends (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1959), pp. 90-99.

<sup>49</sup> Manning Nash, "Witchcraft as Social Process in a Tzeltal Community", Magic, Witchcraft and Curing, ed. Middleton (Garden City, N.Y.: Natural History Press, 1967), pp. 127-133.

<sup>50</sup> Séguin, La Sorcellerie au Québec, pp. 12-15.

<sup>51</sup> Dorson, Bloodstoppers, pp. 71-78.

<sup>52</sup> Wallace, Baptiste Larocque, pp. 42-46.

of the term, loup-garou is not found in Chéticamp.<sup>53</sup> Nevertheless, the stories from the different sources are analogous in that the person transformed is able to cast spells.

The sorciers were also considered to have the power to change others into animals. Minnie Aucoin, in a family discussion about the sorciers said: "They said sorcier can change you into a cat or rat or anything, if they get mad at you. That's what they do to [name of person unclear] one time . . ."<sup>54</sup>

As well, "sorcerie" could cause a victim to act like an animal. Henrietta knew of an incident in which a sorcière caused a young woman to act like a cow:

There was some woman too, in Cap Rouge. There was a young girl, seventeen years old. They said she was a pretty girl, bright and everything. And once she started like a cow, and eating the grass. And they said she'd kick and everything.<sup>55</sup>

In Chéticamp, this manifestation was usually recognized as "possession". Another case was cited by Henrietta Aucoin. When her mother refused to give to the sorcier Gabriel, her brother Eddie became "possessed". In this case it was believed the "sorcerie" was transferred from a cow to a pig<sup>56</sup> and finally to the boy.

<sup>53</sup> According to Bernie LeVert, conversation, Nov. 1979.

<sup>54</sup> 239

<sup>55</sup> 1146.

<sup>56</sup> Reference to this instance is previously given, p. 89.

I had a brother who was retarded. And she always said it was him [Gabriel]. He was five years old and she said he was alright before that. After they killed the pig. That's what she said. And him, you remember? [To her guest, Lionel Aucoin]. Sometimes he said, "I heard them on the house. I heard them!" He was not like somebody who was-- Sometimes he was bad and sometimes he wasn't. He was like another-- But my mother always said that.<sup>57</sup>

The man to whom Henrietta Aucoin spoke verified her story and pointed out that Eddie seemed to have clairvoyance: "He wasn't stupid actually. Because I was away from here for twenty-four years, and I came home. Eddie knew that without seeing me".<sup>58</sup>

The implication of the work of devils in Mrs. Aucoin's testimony ("I heard them!") was substantiated by Ulysses LeLievre in a separate interview. He gave his impressions of Eddie's extraordinary actions, which he also attributed to sorcery:

. . . a Chiasson, not living too, too far from my place. On a hot day like today . . . and hay-making time. He came from the United States sick . . . I remember that very well. I was not more than fifteen years of age. I remember to see that man standing on one leg from six o'clock in the morning till ten o'clock at night. Standing at the corner of the house in the broad daylight. Hot summer day like that, without sweating or anything. Right on one foot. I saw that with my two bloody eyes! And I seen him running from six o'clock in the morning till dark, from one end to another of the field, without stopping, going twenty-four hours without stopping, at night still running. One day they went to the doctor . . . He said it was supernatural. There was not a human being who could stand. Dr. LeBlanc of Chéticamp told his

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<sup>57</sup> 1146

<sup>58</sup> Lionel Aucoin, 1146.

father that not a human being would be able to stand in that sun there without fainting away. . . . I remember to see, he used to dirty his pants . . . take the clothes on the stove and water and the pot was turning just as green-- clothes, water, soap, everything, green.<sup>59</sup>

Ulysses LeLievre told of an incident with Holy Water which emphasized his belief that Eddie was possessed by devils:

LeLievre: . . . He was going upstairs, downstairs, fifty thousand times. They put some Holy Water on the last few steps when the crazy man was not looking. When the man came back down the stairs he jumped over the last three steps. He didn't see the Holy Water falling on the step. He had his back turned toward us, I know. When he was climbing down again he must have jumped three steps. He didn't touch those steps. I know damn well he had to have a magnifying glass to see a drop of water that was on the step.

Planetta: Was Eddie actually possessed by the devil?

LeLievre: Oh, yes. Not only one. Sometimes a week without a bite to eat. Then he turn around and eat four five gallon, same like a pig. He said, "I don't eat alone. Somebody else eats with me." He used to say that himself. He said, "Whatever I do I'm not all alone. There's always somebody to help me. Something good, yes. Something bad, yes."<sup>60</sup>

Ulysses LeLievre concluded by saying that Eddie was now old, and living in an institution for the insane.<sup>61</sup>

Dr. Gabriel Boudreau had tended Eddie Chiasson and stated that the man was mentally ill. Dr. Boudreau was not aware that his illness was attributed to sorcery; in

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<sup>59</sup> 1146.

<sup>60</sup> 1146.

<sup>61</sup> Ari Kiev's Magic, Faith and Healing (New York: Free Press, 1964), deals with psychiatric disorders which are believed, in certain tribal societies, to be the result of witchcraft.

fact, he expressed surprise that such a belief was held.<sup>62</sup> It is significant that the local doctor was not aware of the community's attitude toward this case. It appeared that the views concerning sorcery and illness were shared only with those who would find them acceptable.

#### Physical Illness Caused by Sorcery

J.J. Deveaux recalled of how his aunt had "got cursed" by sorcery; he described her condition as "craziness". There was difficulty in getting her to eat. A doctor was consulted but he found nothing wrong with her. She lived for about two months in this state, then died. Following this, her son was afflicted with the same "craziness". In this case the doctor also could find nothing wrong. However, instead of dying, the son recovered and joined the Canadian Armed Forces.<sup>63</sup> Dr. Gabriel Boudreau, who emphatically stated that he had never knowingly treated a patient affected by sorcery, recalled that his predecessor had talked of a woman who died without any apparent pathological symptoms. The woman whose name was not known to Dr. Boudreau, "wasted away", and seemed to have died of mere malnutrition.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> 1178.

<sup>63</sup> 1144.

<sup>64</sup> 1178.

Ordinary illnesses with discernible symptoms were also attributed to sorcery. Though the illness itself may have appeared to be "natural", significantly the misfortune of a certain person, and at that particular time, was attached to the belief that the afflicted person had offended a sorcier. Such a case was cited by Denise Deveaux:

... and maybe sometimes, people they didn't like-- I remember my uncle. Really remember my father telling me about that. I don't know what he did to the sorciere, but she put a spell on him, and he was getting a sore throat. And he really got sick. He wasn't eating or nothing. They had to get that George LeBrun to take the spell out of him-- He really had a sore throat. He couldn't swallow anything at all, at all. He would have died if they-- 65

Modern science and anthropological research offer a naturalistic explanation for the occurrence of death believed caused by sorcery.<sup>66</sup> W.B. Cannon, in "Voodoo Death"<sup>67</sup> proposed that there is an over-reaction in the victim when the fear engendered by the threat of the sorcerer causes the body to be stimulated to meet an emergency:

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<sup>65</sup> 1144.

<sup>66</sup> A survey of the current literature on death by sorcery is found in Kalish, "Non-Medical Intervention in Life and Death", Social Sciences and Medicine, 4 (1957), pp. 655-665.

<sup>67</sup> A Reader in Comparative Religion, 3rd ed., eds. William A. Lessa and Evon Z. Vogt (New York: Harper and Row, 1965), pp. 433-439.

Through the sympathetic nervous system, muscles are prepared for action by the production of large amounts of adrenalin and sugar, and by the contraction of certain blood vessels. When the emergency is not met by action, or is prolonged, a state of shock may result. The blood pressure is reduced, the heart deteriorates, and the blood plasma escapes into the tissues. Lack of food and water compound the deleterious physiological state. A continuation of this condition may lead to death . . . 68

Cannon points out that the attitude of the community toward someone believed affected by sorcery "adds stimuli to suggest death positively to the victim, who is in a highly suggestible state".<sup>69</sup> There is a tendency to isolate the victim socially and to prepare for the mourning of his death.

The cases cited by Mr. and Mrs. Deveau illustrate the characteristics of "voodoo" death suggested by Cannon: food and water are refused, and the people surrounding the sick person expect his death. The case concerning Denise Deveau's uncle also complies with Cannon's observation that magic-ritualistic counter-actions can indeed alleviate the condition of the sick person.<sup>70</sup>

There were a number of other maladies which might have been attributed to "auto-suggestion" promoted by the belief in sorcery. A woman became ill from drinking milk

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<sup>68</sup>Cannon, "Voodoo Death", p. 435.

<sup>69</sup>Cannon, p. 435.

<sup>70</sup>Cannon, p. 435.



from a cow which was cursed by a sorcier.<sup>71</sup> A man who had refused to give to a begging sorcier fell from a ladder and suffered injury to his shoulder.<sup>72</sup> A man was made "nervous" by the sorcery of his wife, a woman from outside the community. Marie Deveau referred to this case:

There was a man who married-- They called him Little John-- who married a woman. She was from Madeleine Islands, I think. And she was a sorcière. And she have throwed-- on her husband . . . Because he was so nervous and out of himself. He wasn't getting better . . .<sup>73</sup>

Ulysses LeLievre knew of the same man:

. . . his wife . . . His wife put a wish on him, and he was-- He was going down the drain. . . . she was Madeleine Island.<sup>74</sup>

In the case of illness or disability in newborns, the possibility of auto-suggestion is less likely. The cause of their illness rested entirely with the fear of the people who were believed to practise sorcery. Lionel Aucoin told of a now-well girl in the community who was marred by sorcery in her infancy:

L. Aucoin: You remember her [to Henrietta Aucoin]. Married. Well when she was born she had the "runs" [diarrhea] steady. And it got to the stage where there was blood coming out of her. So Mama, the old grandmother, she said, "O.K. I'll fix that up". What she did? . . . and she put something on the stove. I don't know what the hell. Put water

<sup>71</sup> Lionel Aucoin, 1146.

<sup>72</sup> Mrs. Clovis Aucoin (first name not known), conversation, August 1979.

<sup>73</sup> 1166.

<sup>74</sup> 1146.

on the stove.

H. Aucoin: Pins and--

L. Aucoin: Then when the pot comes to a boil, he's [the sorcier] supposed to be at the door. You don't let him in-- He's got to make that clear.<sup>75</sup>

A case of a girl who was born deaf was referred to by two informants. One informant, who wishes anonymity, lived in La Prairie, near Cheticamp Village, the same area where the "sorcerie" took place. She at first vehemently denied the existence of sorcery, but then mentioned that a certain sorcier who lived "over there" had cursed his daughter and made her deaf.<sup>76</sup> Marie Deveaux also remembered the incident: "There was another fellow too at the Prairie there that could-- and they worked it [the sorcery]. I don't know if they saw her or-- For a long time they did something to her hearing."<sup>77</sup>

From the narratives collected about "sorcerie" which caused accident or illness, it appeared that any community member, young or old, might have been susceptible to the "working" of the sorcery.

#### The Means of Sorcery and the Source of Power

The sorcier's specific source of power which produced

<sup>75</sup>1146.

<sup>76</sup>For comments on curses on newborn children, see Herbert Halpert, "Legends of the Cursed Child", New York Folklore Quarterly XIV (1958), pp. 233-241.

<sup>77</sup>1166.

the harmful effect was not articulated by the Chéticantins.<sup>78</sup>

However, some necessary pre-conditions for the practice of the "sorcerie" have been recorded. For instance, one informant maintained that the sorcier must see the intended victim or object of his sorcery.<sup>79</sup> The same informant stated that when a fly entered the mouth of a certain sleeping sorcière, she could then do her sorcery.<sup>80</sup>

According to Anselme Chiasson:

La tradition populaire veut qu'un sorcier qui va accomplir ses méfaits quelque part, se couche la bouche ouverte et son âme s'envole avec son souffle vers ce lieu. Si quelqu'un lui fermait la bouche et le nez trop longtemps quand son âme revient, le sorcier mourait.<sup>81</sup>

The observation that the actions of the sorcerer are a mystery is shared by Evans-Pritchard,<sup>82</sup> and by Krige.<sup>83</sup>

Lucy Mair, in Witchcraft, stated:

<sup>78</sup>This also appeared to be the case among the Acadians in New Brunswick. Ronald LaBelle noted, "... people didn't often try to explain to themselves the source of the sorcerers' power. Sorcerers' rituals were rarely witnessed ..." Correspondence, January 1980.

<sup>79</sup>Marie Deveaux, conversation, November 1978.

<sup>80</sup>Marie Deveaux, conversation, November 1979.

<sup>81</sup>Chiasson, Chéticamp, p. 262-263

<sup>82</sup>"Witchcraft and Native Opinion", Witchcraft and Sorcery, ed. Marwick, p. 29.

<sup>83</sup>"The Social Function of Witchcraft", Witchcraft and Sorcery, ed. Marwick, p. 239.

[Witches have] . . . powers not possessed by ordinary folk . . . which operate in a manner that cannot be detected, so that the cause can only be recognized when the damage comes to light.<sup>84</sup>

The lack of descriptive evidence in ascertaining the sorcerer's means of casting a spell offers the possibility that, instead of using a formula or ritual magic, he may have possessed innate supernatural powers. Indeed, the instances of "sorcerie" already mentioned, involving "possession" and the appearances of the black dog, suggest that this power may have come from the devil.<sup>85</sup> However, in Chéticamp, the direct connection of a black dog with the devil was not expressed in the data collected.

Marie Deveau, when asked if the sorcerers' power came from the devil, replied cautiously that it was possible since the sorcerer was an evil person. She seemed reluctant to expand upon her answer and gave the impression that such an idea had not been discussed before.<sup>86</sup> Ulysses LeLièvre was the only informant to directly associate the power of the Chéticamp sorcerers with the devil:

Sorcery was black magic. And you give your soul to the devil. It is very easy-- for a person to give himself to hell. I don't mean to say a

<sup>84</sup> Lucy Mair, Witchcraft (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1969), p. 7.

<sup>85</sup> Barbara Allen Wood, The Devil in Dog Form: A Partial Type-Index of Devil Legends.

<sup>86</sup> Conversation, April 1979.

devil with a pitchfork that you hold like that [gesture]. To hell with that! What I mean to say-- you can-- There's some kind of super-nature to those things-- Special books to read . . . at twelve o'clock on such and such a day of the year at a cross-roads. You took a black cat and a cross made of bones. And they can give themselves to hell by doing so.<sup>87</sup>

The lack of similar testimony in the community suggested that Mr. LeLievre's opinion was influenced by literary sources. However, Sr. Catherine Jolicoeur, in answer to my enquiry, stated that "Black Books" were known to the Acadians in New Brunswick where sorcery was practised. Some of her informants said that the books were delivered from France by ships. In Memramcook, it was reported, a barrel full of books was found on the beach. The books were introduced to Acadians who were "not very religious" by men from France.<sup>88</sup>

From the sparsity of narratives on the topic of the sorciers' methods, it appears that this was not a matter of particular concern for the Chéticantins. In retrospect, they seemed to attribute the sorciers' power to their own belief. As Denise Deveau repeatedly pointed out: "If

<sup>87</sup> 1146. Hand, 5591.

<sup>88</sup> Correspondence, August 1978. According to Lauraine Léger, Les Sanctions Populaires en Acadie: Région du Comté de Kent, p. 139, and Ronald LaBelle, Centre d'études acadiennes, Moncton, there were two such sorcerers' handbooks in New Brunswick Acadian tradition -- Le Petit Albert and Le Grand Albert.

you believe in that [the "sorcerie"] then they can harm you".<sup>89</sup>

#### REACTIONS TO THE SORCERY

Reaction to sorcery by the Chéticantins was not limited to fearful anticipation or acceptance. Protective rituals, both religious and magical were used, and when the results of sorcery became evident, especially in illness, priests and doctors were consulted. The most effective means of overcoming the enchantment or "sorcellage" seems to have been "counter-sorcery" as practised by the person or family affected, or by a member of the community who was known to have certain beneficial powers. The word "counter-sorcery" was not used by the Chéticantins; instead they said the affected person was "delivré" (delivered), or they said that a person "knew what to do" or that a person "did something" or "worked something". The counter-sorcery not only delivered the victim, but also often identified and sometimes punished the sorcier. Direct physical aggression and legal action were also known to have been used against the sorciers and these as well appeared to be effective.

#### Religion and Science

The sprinkling of Holy Water was considered to be a potent force against both natural danger and the evil of

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<sup>89</sup> Conversations, 1978-1980.

sorcery. Ulysses LeLievre's grandfather used Holy Water against "thunder", and accepted the added protection against sorcery, even though he proclaimed not to believe in such things.

... "sorcerie"! My grandfather was a very strong man and he didn't believe in that. But ... at Easter, at the church, the Holy Waters. He used to bring some home to put in his barn-- against thunder. It would stop the thunder to fall. A little bottle of water. We were never bothered by the thunder and we were never bothered by the magic.<sup>90</sup>

Blessed articles, or even ordinary objects shaped like a cross, offered protection against sorcery. J.J. Deveaux said: "He cannot touch religious articles. Because if you make a cross on anything he can do nothing".<sup>91</sup> Denise Deveaux added: "It will undo their power or something. They won't be able to do anything".<sup>92</sup> Arthur Bourgeois reported that his father placed a pair of scissors, opened to look like a cross, on the churn, to prevent sorcery from damaging the success of the butter-making.<sup>93</sup>

The parish priest seemed indifferent to sorcery: "The priest kept very much away from the subject. Didn't bother one way or the other".<sup>94</sup> However, he was occasionally

<sup>90</sup> 1146.

<sup>91</sup> 1194. Hand, 5648.

<sup>92</sup> 1194.

<sup>93</sup> 1145.

<sup>94</sup> J.J. Chiasson, conversation, November 1979.

called upon to use his power, particularly in the case of illness caused by sorcery. In these cases, he responded to his parishioners' needs in ways which could not be directly related to the sorcery itself. Visiting the sick, as in the case of Eddie Chiasson,<sup>95</sup> and the blessing of homes<sup>96</sup> were the routine duties of a parish priest. Marie Deveau saw his lack of direct action against known sorciers as a product of the priest's fear of losing a soul.

Oh, the priest didn't want-- Father Fiset, they asked. But he said it was hard for him. He said, "I cannot lose a soul. When the sorcier throws the "sorcerie" on one, if it's [the "sorcerie"] to die, it's him [the sorcier] that will die." He said, "You always got to give the person a chance."<sup>97</sup>

There were cases in which the priest flatly refused requests to take action against sorcery. The best known incident which illustrates this occurred about 1900. The janitor of the church was bothered by a sorcier named "Little Charlie".

This man asked Father Fiset to do something about it. And Father said he didn't want to meddle with that, I guess. "Well," he [the janitor] said, "if you don't do it, I'll do it." "Well," he [the priest] said, "go ahead."<sup>98</sup>

<sup>95</sup>Henrietta Aucoin, 1146.

<sup>96</sup>Arthur Bourgeois, 1145.

<sup>97</sup>1166.

<sup>98</sup>J.J. Chiasson, 1157. The name "Little Charlie" was used by informants in this study. Anselme Chiasson refers to this man as "petit Charlie", Chéticamp, p. 259.



In a variant of this narrative, Father Fiset had originally concerned himself with a girl who was affected by the sorcier, "Little Charlie". His method of dealing with the sorcery was not indicated.<sup>99</sup> In any of the information about this priest's attitude, there is nothing to indicate that he doubted the existence of sorcery in Chéticamp. Instead, he didn't "admit", or "didn't bother", or told the victim of the sorcery to act on his own.

The priest tell the man-- "If he was after me, I know what to do to get rid of him, but he's not after me." He say, "There's nothing I could do for you-- religion." But he say, "Do what you want. After you-- you could kill him if you want. But me, he's not after me, so there's nothing I could do with it."<sup>100</sup>

When a priest did act, his effectiveness against sorcery was limited: noises continued in the blessed house,<sup>101</sup> Eddie Chiasson was only a "little" better,<sup>102</sup> or the sorcery moved from one person to another.<sup>103</sup>

The doctors who practised in Chéticamp were, like the priests, willing to perform routine duties for those in need, but they denied the possibility of the effects

<sup>99</sup> Anselme Chiasson, Chéticamp, p. 259.

<sup>100</sup> J.J. Deveau, 1144.

<sup>101</sup> Arthur Bourgeois, 1145.

<sup>102</sup> Henrietta Aucoin, 1146.

<sup>103</sup> Chiasson, Chéticamp, p. 259.

of sorcery. Ulysses LeLievre seemed to suggest that a certain doctor was not qualified to diagnose the true cause of one woman's illness, which was believed to be sorcery:

After a few weeks his wife was getting down, down, down. Without any sickness or nothing. Called a doctor. Was old Doctor Fiset. Was just as crazy as a . . . He had a Father Fiset-- was his brother. And he [Dr. Fiset] went there to the woman and he said, "I don't see anything wrong with you. You eat!" "Oh, yes, I eat. Something else-- so low!"<sup>104</sup>

The lack of effective aid from the conventional sources of religion and science may have been a factor in the use of magic ritual by the community as a force against sorcery.

### Magic

The formulaic and repetitive patterns of some of the actions used against sorcery indicate that magic rituals were performed. The efficacy of the patterned actions and words which made up the formulas made magic a practical force against sorcery.<sup>105</sup>

A protective charm was described by Henrietta Aucoin who at first stated, "I don't think there was any protection against sorcery". Packets containing sulphur

<sup>104</sup> 1146.

<sup>105</sup> Bronislaw Malinowski, Religion, Science and Magic and Other Essays (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1954), pp. 69-74, states that the core of magic is the formula, and its essence is emotion.

and a snail were pinned to children's clothing, especially at night, to protect them against sorcery: " . . . and every kid in the house, they put a little bag with sulphur on that, and one of those-- snails . . . The bag they put on you when you go to bed so he can't touch you."<sup>106</sup>

Other objects were believed to be effective as charms. Henrietta Aucoin's mother who believed that sorciers would not go near money, always placed a penny on her churn to ensure that sorcery would not prevent the making of butter.<sup>107</sup> Ulysses LeLievre also knew of the practice of placing money on the churn: "copper, you knew", indicating that copper was the element which kept away the sorcery.<sup>108</sup> J.J. Deveau pointed out that sorciers could not touch money:

It is the only thing he cannot take from you. Money. There's no way he could touch it. Just like the guy makes the show-- the magician-- he could take the wrist watch off your hand-- but he cannot take the money from you . . . But he could make you spend money.<sup>109</sup>

Iron, a commonly known force against various types of "bad" magic,<sup>110</sup> was used in Cheticamp to combat sorcery.

<sup>106</sup> 1146. Hand, 5645.

<sup>107</sup> Henrietta Aucoin, 1146. Hand, 7542.

<sup>108</sup> 1146.

<sup>109</sup> 1194. Hand, 5688.

<sup>110</sup> Gudlaug Kjosterud-Randby, "Iron", Dictionary of Folklore, Mythology and Legend, ed. Maria Leach (New York: Funk and Wagnell, 1949), p. 528.

Marie Deveau recalled that a certain woman resorted to this method when the sorcier Gabriel prevented the making of butter:

. . . and churn and churn and churn . . . and no butter . . . What she did? She put an old fashioned iron on the stove and then she passed her iron inside the churn at the top. It was an old fashioned wooden churn. And you know, she pass her iron. About the next day or the day after, they saw that same guy.<sup>111</sup>

When sorcery affected butter-making in the home of J.J. Chiasson, his parents used iron in the form of crossed spikes "to relieve that".<sup>112</sup>

Another charm against sorcery was the spoken word. According to Ulysses LeLievre, saying the name of the sorcier at a certain time was a way of breaking the spell, but he did not cite a specific incident in which this was used.<sup>113</sup>

When animals were affected by sorcery, a charm consisting of a written formula was sometimes used.<sup>114</sup>

<sup>111</sup>1166.

<sup>112</sup>J.J. Chiasson, 1157.

<sup>113</sup>1146.

<sup>114</sup>Keith Thomas, Religion and the Decline of Magic: Studies in Popular Beliefs in Sixteenth and Seventeenth Century England (Hammondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin, 1973), p. 212. Also Don Yoder, "Folk Medicine", Folklore and Folklife: An Introduction, ed. R. Dorson (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1972), pp. 201-209. Hand, 2382.

Lionel Aucoin reminded his sister-in-law of an incident in which "sorcerie" was removed through the magic of a mysterious prayer which was written on a piece of paper:

You remember that time, Henrietta, when Mother used to buy milk from And something was wrong with the milk. I don't know what it was. My mother got sick. My mother was-- well, you know what she was like. So, Jesus Christ, she made a hell of a fuss over this, you know. So then they called Arthur in, you remember that. So he went down there and there was something wrong with the cow. But the guy's-- he's a veterinarian. But the part was that he didn't do anything to the cow. All he did-- was put that same piece of paper his father used to put in. And then they had to kill the cow. They had a calf of that cow that was ready to milk again. There was nothing wrong with it. Bourgeois came from right here. He was born right here on the back of the mountain. This Arthur we're talking about, this Arthur Bourgeois, his father. When he used to be-- He had a barn. When there used to be a sickness on a cow or horse or anything, he used to come in. I don't know what he did. He used to put a piece of paper on the wall with some writing on it which I couldn't read, or you couldn't read, or nobody couldn't read. I don't know what was marked on it. And then Arthur Bourgeois had no more education than grade one, at the most. But whatever he put on the wall, it seemed like the sickness went away. I don't know whether it was because the people believed in that piece of paper, and believed that the sickness was gone or-- But anyway, that used to be the thing going around here. 115

In a separate interview, Ulysses LeLièvre verified this story, stating that the paper contained the words of a short "Christian" prayer. Although he did not know the prayer, he asserted that it ended in the words,

"through Our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen."<sup>116</sup> J.J. Deveau also confirmed that both Arthur Bourgeois and his father, Charles, were skilled veterinarians, and that Charles Bourgeois was known to place or stick a piece of paper on the wall near the animal which was ensorcelé.<sup>117</sup> Arthur Bourgeois, however, when asked about his part in the use of the "paper", insisted that he had never been involved in removing sorcery from animals.<sup>118</sup>

Anselme Chiasson recorded what was reputedly written on the piece of paper:

Trotter Head I forbid thee my house and premises, I forbid thee my barn and cow stable. I forbid thee not to breathe on me upon any of my family until thou hast painted every fencepost, until thou hast crossed every ocean, and that thus dear dear (sic) day may come in the name of Our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.<sup>119</sup>

An element of magic such as is found in Marchen may be seen in the impossible tasks (" . . . painted every fencepost . . . crossed every ocean") required of the evil force. When asked about the significance of the words "Trotter Head" used in his father's charm, Arthur Bourgeois suggested that it was some form of "code".<sup>120</sup>

<sup>116</sup> 1146.

<sup>117</sup> Conversation, November 1979.

<sup>118</sup> Telephone conversation, November 1979.

<sup>119</sup> Chiasson, Chéticamp, p. 262.

<sup>120</sup> Telephone conversation, November 1979.

That the formula was written in English, and was not understood by many Acadians, undoubtedly added to its magical potency.

Many of the active rituals used by the Chéticantins to remove "sorcerie" and to punish the sorcier can be interpreted according to James G. Frazer's concept of "sympathetic magic", that "things act on each other at a distance through a 'secret sympathy'".<sup>121</sup> Some of the rituals in Chéticamp contained a combination of "contagious" and "homeopathic" magic, which are categories of sympathetic magic.<sup>122</sup>

The most commonly reported ritual was that of putting pins in the urine of the person or animal victimized by sorcery. In a story told by Marie Deveau, new pins were put into a bottle containing urine from the cow affected by sorcery. The bottle was firmly stoppered and soon afterward, the sorcier came in great pain, seeking relief from

<sup>121</sup> James G. Frazer, The Golden Bough: A Study in Magic and Religion, 4 vols. (1922; 3rd. rpt. 12 vols in 1. New York: MacMillan, 1951), p. 12.

<sup>122</sup> Frazer, The Golden Bough, pp. 12-13, defines "homeopathic magic" as "like produces like or that an effect resembles its cause", and "contagious magic", as a ritual in which "things which have once been in contact with each other continue to act upon each other at a distance after the physical contact has been severed". Frazer states that "contagious magic will be generally found to involve an application of the homeopathic . . . principle".

those who had performed the ritual.<sup>123</sup> Denise Deveau recalled the strange way in which her uncle's sore throat was cured:

... They had to get that George LeBrun to take the spell out of him. He told them what to do-- It's really funny, you know. I can remember my father telling that-- He told him-- You know what he told them to do? They had to open the doors in the house. And sit one at each door. My father and my uncle did that. And he told them to put some needles on the stove in a, like a jar, with hot water in it. But they weren't supposed to boil the water. Because if the water was ever boiled, that was it. She would have died before she got there. But when she came in-- She has to come in the house, you know, to take the spell. And they weren't supposed to say one word. She was coming one door and going out the other door. That was and the spell was gone. It's really scary.<sup>124</sup>

In her recollection it is possible that Mrs. Deveau mistook urine for water, or that her father chose not to tell that the liquid with the needles was urine from the man affected by sorcery.

A similar method was used to relieve the baby with the "runs" cited by Lionel Aucoin.<sup>125</sup> In this case, as well, there seems to have been some confusion about the liquid which contained the pins, although Henrietta Aucoin

<sup>123</sup> 1166. Hand, 5577.

<sup>124</sup> 1166.

<sup>125</sup> 1146, transcription given previously, p. 109.



confirmed in later discussion that it was urine.<sup>126</sup> Although no informant explained the reason behind these methods, it was implied that the pins caused suffering for the sorcier, and to obtain relief, he had to go to the practitioners of the counter-sorcery. The sorcier's control of the victim implied spiritual or physical possession of the victim. It was believed that when the urine was harmed, the sorcier was tortured.

A similar example was the beating of the victim in an attempt to get rid of the sorcery. Arthur Bourgeois cited such a case in which the parents of a young girl beat her in order to punish the "wizards in her".<sup>127</sup>

In extreme cases, counter-sorcery was used not only to remove the sorcery from the victim, but to kill the sorcier. The well-known sorcier Gabriel à Goduc supposedly met his death through the actions of one of his victims. The story was cautiously told by two informants, the first of whom was related to the man who worked the magic:

H. Aucoin: When he died, Gabriel Deveau. You know I always heard-- So I heard it was Thomas Chiasson [words spoken in Acadian dialect]. He had something. He had some hens he owned. I don't know what happened to his hens. He had

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<sup>126</sup>1146.

<sup>127</sup>1145.

some chickens, hens, and they were all ensorcellées. So he put one hen in the oven and he cooked it. So Gabriel came all--

L. Aucoin: Alive, it was alive!

H. Aucoin: He took that and he worked-- toute! The skin was all-- all--

L. Aucoin: Blistered all the way!

H. Aucoin: And he died. I don't know if that's the truth, but I heard, I heard-- I don't know if it was because of the chickens, but it was like that that he died. But Thomas Chiasson was said. It was my father. A live chicken.<sup>128</sup>

Details of the same incident were given by J.J.

Deveaux:

I don't know if it's true or not. I hear that when he die somebody killed him. Because he was one of the-- sorcier-- And he was bothering lots of people. One day there was a guy having lots of hens. And he sell eggs. And the hens start to do, to get sick, and in a day or two they die. One day he went to the barn. And the hen was sick. He take one and he take it to the house and put it in the oven and tied up the oven. And make a big fire. Cook them, like that, alive. Two three days, Gabriel get sick. He started to have a hole in his side like a burn. After a couple of weeks he died. I never seen them. I don't know if it's true. At the time they were talking about that, I know Gabriel die.<sup>129</sup>

In telling how the sorcier died, J.J. Deveaux repeatedly pointed out that the torture of the hen was probably immoral, though the killing of the sorcier was justified.

<sup>128</sup> 1146.

<sup>129</sup> 1194. R. Dorson cites a similar incident in "Mother Hicks the Witch", Buying the Wind (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964), pp. 55-56.

In this case, as well, both contagious and homeopathic magic are demonstrated: Gabriel was burned and killed because the hen under his control was subjected to the same treatment.

Similarly, the man who was made "nervous" by his sorciere wife from the Magdalen Islands, punished her by beating himself:

His wife . . . He kill his wife. His wife had a bad wish on him . . . A fellow says to him, "I know what's wrong with you." He said, "You go to the seashore. Don't say no word to nobody. Keep your . . . shut. Take two big stones as big as you can. So big you can hardly lift it-- ." And he used two stone and he hit himself like that, on any part of his body. Just by the touch he would feel faint. In a few weeks his wife was going down, down. . . . He used to take stones of four, five pound and beat himself to death with it . . . Was "voodoo", some kind of sorcerie". 130

Marie Deveaux told the same story, but seemed reluctant to admit that the man had killed his wife:

Deveaux: . . . and she threw some kind of-- I think she died . . . He said he didn't know for sure that it was her. Thought it was somebody else. He said, "Whoever did that to me, has to get it back."

Planetta: Was this the man who hit himself with rocks in order to kill his wife?

Deveaux: Yes, with rocks. He went by the shore and-- Somebody told you that? 131

The best known ritual carried out by a victim of "sorcerie" was one in which a snowman served as a

130 Ulysses LeLievre, 1146.

131 1166.

"likeness" of the sorcier. In this case, only the homeopathic principle of sympathetic magic was evident. The snowman was "wounded" by the victim; this caused the sorcier to be injured and eventually die:

There was one. He was supposed to have been put to his death by one of the. Some way that this fellow-- This fellow was a French fellow. He was a handyman for the priest there. His name was Aucoin. He was janitor for the priest. He was caretaker. That story goes like this. The man asked Father Fiset to do something about it. And Father said he didn't want to meddle with that, I guess. "Well," he said, "if you don't do it I'll do it." Well, "he [the priest] said, "go ahead." And he made his snowman. Then when the snowman started to melt he [the Jerseyman suspected of the sorcery] got sick. I don't remember that Jerseyman, his name. And according as the snow would melt, he was getting worse, sick. The next day he was dead, this Jerseyman. He didn't do anything to the janitor. The janitor was working on the case of a person that was supposed to be entranced of that kind by this Jerseyman. He was just acting as a go-between, as a reliever.<sup>132</sup>

In another variant of this narrative, J.J. Deveau recounted that the caretaker was actively bothered by the sorcery. In his story, the caretaker gave the snowman the same name as the sorcier Little Charlie. After he shot the snowman, the caretaker placed a sign warning people not to touch it:

And that guy who it was, that man, he made a statue just like a scarecrow, something. And he named him same name as that man. He take

<sup>132</sup> J.J. Chiasson, 1157. Hand, 5549, 5580.

a shot gun and he shoot him. He make that with snow. He make a snowman and he put clothes on, and he named it the man, you know, and shoot him. My father say he saw that man. He was-- He shoot him in the body with a shot gun. And he have a sign saying nobody to touch. Let him melt like the snow when it melt. And that man started to get sick. He was just like a-- And when the snowman was all gone, the man died. . . . the name of the witch that time, his name was Charlie, the man who was trying to scare the man who was working at the glebe house.<sup>134</sup>

J.J. Deveau gave reasons for Charlie's attempt to scare the man: "He have a fight or something like that before and he was trying to scare him. But this happened to be a guy who was not too scared of him".<sup>135</sup>

The same story recorded by Anselme Chiasson involved a girl named Marie who was under the control of the sorcier. Father Fiset, having removed the curse from the girl, then inadvertently brought it back to the glebe house where it victimized the handyman Jeffery Crispou.<sup>136</sup>

In this version there were mysterious fires in which nothing was burned. The shooting of the snowman was ritualized by advancing and retreating a certain number of steps before shooting.<sup>137</sup>

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<sup>134</sup> 1144. Hand, 5579, 5696.

<sup>135</sup> 1144.

<sup>136</sup> Crispou is a French name, not Acadian; in some accounts the caretaker or handyman was an Acadian named Aucoin.

<sup>137</sup> Chiasson, Chéticamp, p. 260.

Henrietta told yet another variant in which the sorcier, Charlie, did not die:

... not shot, but put a knife. It was one of my cousins that made the snowman. They had something in the house that no He said to make a snowman and take a knife. And he said that man, Gabri-- no, it was not Gabriel. It was another man. Comment!-- Charlie! I think. So he said the-- Charlie was leaving, he was spitting blood. He put the knife through the snowman, through his heart-- . Charlie did not die.<sup>138</sup>

At the Centre d'études acadiennes, Moncton, there is an example of this story told by Francis LeVert:

A la pointe, dans c'temps là les vieux, eh oui. I' avait P'tit Charlie qu'i' l'appeliont, Charlie Romard. Ben lui . . . J' c'é pas si t'as entendu parler de c't' histoire là. Mais i' bodrait, j' c'é pas si c'tait Père Fiset qu'était dans l' temps. C'é un prêtre anyway de Chéticamp. Et pi i' en a un j' c'é pas chi c'était, p't-ête ben un ~~servant~~ du prêtre. Dans l'hivers i' fit un homme de neige, à peu près d' la même size qu'était Charlie Romard. Pi i' shootit avec un fusil. C'é supposé qu'après ça que c'é que Charlie Romard vient qui l'était arrêté par un mal qui djerrissait pas. Pi i' l'é mort.<sup>139</sup>

138 1146.

139 Collector: Jules Chiasson, Bob 1: No. 10, 1974. Because this transcription is given in Acadian dialect, a translation by Bernie LeVert is provided: At La Pointe (northwest tip of Chéticamp Island), at that time the old people, oh yes. There was Little Charlie they called him, Charlie Romard. Well him . . . I don't know if you have heard about that story. But he was bothering, I don't know if it was Father Fiset who was there at that time. It was a priest anyway in Chéticamp. And there was one, I don't know who it was, maybe the servant at the glebe. In the winter he made a snowman, about Charlie Romard's size. And he shot it with a gun. Supposedly that after that Charlie Romard got to the point that he could not move because of a pain which would not cure. And he died.

Ulysses LeLièvre cited an incident which happened years after the incident involving Father Fiset and his handyman. In this instance George LeBrun was consulted about a sick cow and he suggested a similar method of reprisal for the sorcery which was on the cow:

LeLièvre: This happened in Chéticamp here, at Cap Rouge. A cow was sick, very sick. Old George LeBrun-- My grandfather went to have a look and talk to him. He said, "You go home". He said, "Don't-- with bullets-- Take a piece of money, because they're against money".

Planetta: Was the money at that time silver?

LeLièvre: Oh, yes, all silver-- A man like that was very poor. The only thing they can do is wish against somebody who is getting along better than they do-- He took a ten cent piece and twisted it with a hammer and he made bullets with it. He made a snowman and shoot him, and as the snowman melt he the sorcier get worse. He was a man from the Madeleine Islands who cross here. I don't want to say [his name], because he have some relatives left.<sup>140</sup>

The use of effigies in ritual killings is widely known in folklore.<sup>141</sup> However, except for Acadian tradition, the snowman effigy does not appear to be common. Sr. Catherine Jolicoeur noted that this motif -- shooting a snowman in order to punish a sorcerer -- was found in the Magdalen Islands.<sup>142</sup> Lauraine Léger, as well, commented

<sup>140</sup> 1146.. Hand, 5697.

<sup>141</sup> Alfred Métraux, Voodoo in Haiti, trans. Hugo Charteris (New York: Schocken Books, 1972), p. 272.

<sup>142</sup> Correspondence, August 1978.

that this motif seemed to be exclusively Acadian.<sup>143</sup> In keeping with the meteorological conditions of the Atlantic region, the snowman effigy nonetheless complies with the universal homeopathic principle of magic: producing a desired effect by imitating it.<sup>144</sup>

#### Overt Antagonism

Direct physical aggression by way of action or threats was used against sorciers, by men, to a limited extent at the time that the sorcery was practised. For example, Arthur Bourgeois threatened to kill George LeBryn for "putting" sorcery on his cousin.<sup>145</sup> J.J. Chiasson told of a sorcier who was attacked by a man for placing a certain girl under his power:

One fellow was threatening. Then he grabbed him by the throat. A certain girl was supposed to be in his control. And threw him. "You leave that girl alone or I'll choke you!" The girl was alright after that.<sup>146</sup>

This attack on the sorcier was witnessed by several other men who apparently approved of the action taken.<sup>147</sup>

<sup>143</sup> Conversation, October 1979.

<sup>144</sup> Frazer, The Golden Bough, p. 13.

<sup>145</sup> 1145.

<sup>146</sup> 1157.

<sup>147</sup> 1157.



The most marked evidence of community opinion was a court case in which a person was apparently charged and found guilty of the practice of sorcery. A vague remembrance of the case was held by J.J. Deveaux.<sup>148</sup> Dr. Gabriel Boudreau, who declined to give the name of the accused man, said that the trial took place in the late 1930s. The man was reprimanded, put on probation, and "warned not to try anything like that again".<sup>149</sup> Judge Roland MacIntyre, when asked about the case,<sup>150</sup> said that the practice of sorcery was not a crime in Nova Scotia. Unfortunately, no evidence was found to shed further light on this incident. According to one informant, the police force in Cheticamp at that time consisted of one local constable, and all court cases were tried in the neighbouring community of Margaree.<sup>151</sup> It may be surmised that the accused man was openly using threats of sorcery, and that pressure from the community

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<sup>148</sup> Conversation, December 1979.

<sup>149</sup> Dr. Gabriel Boudreau, 1178.

<sup>150</sup> by Denise Deveaux. Conversation, December 1979.

<sup>151</sup> J.J. Chiasson, 1157.

resulted in his arrest and trial.<sup>152</sup>

### Summary

Many of the everyday misfortunes and unusual or frightening experiences of the people of Chéticamp, before 1940, were attributed to the work of the "jeteux de sorts" (the throwers of spells). Activities related to dairy production seemed to be most frequently affected by sorcery. These manifestations, as well as those affecting the health of community members, appeared especially to act indirectly against the women of the community. The men had more direct encounters with the manifestations, such as les feux-follets, but the practical consequences were less serious. Other powers exhibited by the sorciers were magical transportation, clairvoyance, invisibility, and transformation. These

<sup>152</sup> Manning Nash, "Witchcraft as Social Process in a Tzaltal Community", pp. 127-133, shows how a Central American community sanctions the killing of a person believed to be practising witchcraft. Esther Goody, "Legitimate and Illegitimate Aggression in a West African State", Witchcraft Confessions and Accusations, ed. Mary Douglas (London, Tavistock, 1970), pp. 207-244, notes that aggression against witches in Gonja societies is based on whether the accused person is male or female.

also appeared in manifestations which related to the livelihood and social life of the Chéticamp Acadians. The information collected suggests several possibilities as to the sorciers' techniques of sorcery and their source of power.

The people of Chéticamp resorted to various defensive strategies in their reaction to the sorcery. Self-taught veterinarians, and other members of the community were believed to have powers or knowledge which enabled them to combat sorcery. The help of priests and doctors was sought, but this did not seem to be effective against the sorcery. However, religion-related charms such as Holy Water, or an article shaped like a cross were believed to work successfully against sorcery. The packets containing sulphur and a snail, the iron objects, and the money on the churn, also represent charms. Homeopathic and contagious magic was used to harm the sorciers; the most common ritual apparently was the boiling of pins in urine. Direct aggression against the sorciers included threats, beatings, and legal action.

The community made the distinction between the good of the "counter-sorcery" and the evil of the sorcery by condoning aggressive action against those who caused the initial harm. In all cases in which magic was used to punish or even kill the sorcier, the community appeared satisfied with the result of the ritual.

Sorcery is no longer practised in Chéticamp, but the tradition of belief in sorcery lives on. The vitality of the belief can be demonstrated in the various aspects of the narratives as they were collected from the people of Chéticamp. The performance of the narratives in terms of style and context reveals much about the attitudes of tellers and listeners toward the belief. Behaviour resulting from narrative performances, such as the taking of preventive measures against sorcery, also gives an indication of the levels of belief.

#### Narrative Performance in Groups

Directed personal interviewing often became occasions for informal group narrative sessions. In these instances, the impressions of the past practise of sorcery were based on a shared knowledge of life-conditions, people and places, and a shared belief in the existence of sorcery. Otto Blehr states that "It is essential for the preservation of folk belief notions that their elements should be in stories with a contemporary frame of reference".<sup>1</sup> Being contemporaries, those interviewed in groups were able to prod each other's memories, and they also confirmed, clarified or challenged the opinions or "stories" of the others.

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<sup>1</sup>"The Analysis of Folk Belief Stories and Its Implications for Research on Folk Belief and Folk Prose", Fabula, 9 (1967), p. 260.

Just as an interview with Henrietta Aucoin was about to begin in her home, she was visited by her brother-in-law, Lionel Aucoin, who had just arrived "home" from Toronto. The scene was set for telling about the "old days". The catalytic presence of a researcher, and the man's yearning to recall his life in the community, prompted reminiscences about Cheticamp's past. Sorcery being the topic of the interview at his arrival, he was willing to compare his experiences and feelings on the topic with those of his sister-in-law. With an awareness of the interviewer and the children of Mrs. Aucoin as audience, they exchanged their stories about sorcery.

Lionel Aucoin sought confirmation of his descriptions with comments such as: "You remember that time Henrietta, when . . ."<sup>2</sup>; "My mother was-- well, you know what she was like."<sup>3</sup> In her turn, Henrietta Aucoin clarified Lionel Aucoin's description of a ritual, telling that it was urine, not water, in which was boiled the pins in order to punish the sorcier.<sup>4</sup> By involving each other in their stories of sorcery, these two informants shared the responsibility of the truth of their statements.

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<sup>2</sup>1146.

<sup>3</sup>1146.

<sup>4</sup>1146.

In another "group interview" held in the home of J.J. and Denise Deveau, a somewhat confusing situation evolved. By their competition for the interviewer's attention, Mr. and Mrs. Deveau managed to set up a chain of narratives, comments and interruptions which tended to confirm each other's testimonies. At one point, J.J. Deveau was discussing lutins while his wife was talking about the sorciers. When the wife was asked about sorciers, the husband answered concerning the lutins. (This was not an uncommon situation in any discussion in this household.) An interesting result of this mixing of motifs was the information that the lutins supplied the horses which transported the sorciers on their overnight trips to the Channel Islands.<sup>5</sup>

Mrs. Deveau, the less aggressive of the pair, was usually responsible for prompting her husband's narratives by attempting to begin one of her own. For example, in reference to the story about shooting a snowman in order to kill a sorcier, she began:

Do you know what they were doing? They would make a statue like a scarecrow or something like that, to resemble the man-- . And they would shoot the statue and that would kill whoever put the spell-- .<sup>6</sup>

At this point she was interrupted by her husband who told his slightly different and more complete version:

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<sup>5</sup> 1144.

<sup>6</sup> 1144.

(There was a guy working at the glebe house in Chéticamp. And he was staying there. And he would say in the night, a guy with a team of horses go, could go on his bed to scare him. And he went after the priest and he told the priest. And the priest said, "There's nothing I could do." He said, "If you could do something yourself, go ahead."<sup>7</sup>

The mention of the priest incited an interruption attempt on the part of his wife. She wanted to tell about another priest who was frightened by sorcery even though he didn't believe in it.<sup>8</sup> She was unsuccessful and her husband carried on with his story.

And that guy who it was, that man, he made a statue just like a scarecrow, something-- He shoot him-- and when the snowman was all gone, the man died.<sup>9</sup>

His wife ended the story with the comment, "That was scary."<sup>10</sup>

When J.J. Deveau told about magical transportation by sorciers on firewood from Chéticamp to Margaree, his wife commented in confirmation, "That was good, eh?"<sup>11</sup> She concluded a humorous episode on the same topic by saying, "Crazy!"<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> 1144.

<sup>8</sup> 1144.

<sup>9</sup> 1144.

<sup>10</sup> 1144.

<sup>11</sup> 1144.

<sup>12</sup> 1144.

During another description of an incident of illness caused by sorcery given by Mrs. Deveau, J.J. Deveau pointed out that the incident occurred before her time, and implied that the authenticity of the story was questionable. Denise Deveau defended the truth of her story by saying that she had often heard her older relatives talking about it.<sup>13</sup>

Still further affirmative mechanics were observed in one of the interviews with Ulysses LeLièvre. His wife, although friendly and hospitable, remained in the background while her husband was being interviewed, and refrained from contributing to the collection of sorcery beliefs. However, her silent presence was a tacit acknowledgement of Ulysses LeLièvre's stories about sorcery.

In the momentum of these performances, the belief in sorcery had sufficient support from other participating persons.<sup>14</sup> There was no open attempt to convince the interviewer of the validity of what was being said, although such an attempt may have been covert within the

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<sup>13</sup> 1144.

<sup>14</sup> Linda Dégh and Andrew Vazsonyi point out in "Legend and Belief", Genre, IV:1 (1971), p. 293, that when belief stories are shared by groups of people, ". . . the contributor, the expander, the stimulator, the critic and the challenger--play equally important roles and often switch them".



performance of the narratives. Similar techniques are discussed by Dégh and Vázsonyi who observed that the interaction of participants in legend-telling sessions influenced the performance of the narrators, and resulted in positive or negative attempts at confirmation: "The speaker is influenced, stimulated and encouraged, or conversely discouraged, intimidated, challenged and forced into argumentation by the comments of the listeners".<sup>15</sup>

The children and teenagers who were present at the adults' discussions of sorcery in the Aucoin and Deveau homes reacted in ways typical of their age. The distance in time between them and the sorcery, along with all the factors of a modern age, caused the young people to take a scientific view of the sorcery based on knowledge gained mainly from television.

The children, ranging in each case from age seven to sixteen, were attracted to the kitchen by the stories about the Chéticamp sorcery. Mrs. Aucoin's children reacted at first with awed questions: "He shot a snowman-- a snowman?"<sup>16</sup> This attitude changed rapidly to joking skepticism: "I thought you said you had no money when you were growing up."

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<sup>15</sup> Dégh and Vázsonyi, "Legend and Belief", p. 293. Also Stith Thompson, "The Folktale as Living Art", The Folktale (New York: The Dryden Press, 1951), p. 453.

<sup>16</sup> 1146.

How could you put a cent on the churn?"<sup>17</sup> When the Aucoin children had established their presence, they contributed to the clarification of one of the stories, giving a modern interpretation of "voodoo" death as it was depicted on television programs about Haiti or New Orleans. Or they confirmed non-committal information such as the superstitiousness of a certain aunt: "She was afraid of everything."<sup>18</sup>

The older children of Mrs. Aucoin indicated that, some of the incidents of sorcery were known from school, through their teachers: "But you know, just like telling stories or something,"<sup>19</sup> indicating a remoteness compared to the greater depth of meaning and truth in the same stories when told at home by Mother. Even so, they could not completely relate to the childhood fear of sorcery described by Mrs. Aucoin:

We were so scared because we heard them [talking about sorcery]. Every night we heard, we went to bed and we put blankets on our heads . . . because they were always talking like that when we were kids.<sup>20</sup>

In response to the sorcery stories, the children of Mr. and Mrs. Deveau were raucous and slightly disrespectful.

<sup>17</sup> 1146.

<sup>18</sup> 1146.

<sup>19</sup> 1146.

<sup>20</sup> 1146.

at first. They gathered in the living-room next to the kitchen, and imitated fairies and witches for the amusement of each other and to the winks of the adults. Gradually, however, they drifted into the kitchen and listened with increasing interest to the stories of their parents.

In both of these cases, the children's belief in sorcery was probably weak or non-existent. Although they exhibited an interest in it, they did not have an involvement in the life ways which contributed to the adults' belief. The requirement for belief suggested by Blehr, the "contemporary frame of reference,"<sup>21</sup> is lacking in these instances. In comparison to the adults who appeared to have whole-hearted acceptance of the stories and the beliefs contributing to them, the children displayed either total rejection or humourous incredulity,<sup>22</sup> or treated the stories as "legends" of the past, having primarily entertainment value.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>21</sup> Otto Blehr, "The Analysis of Folk Belief Stories and Its Implications for Research on Folk Belief and Folk Prose", p. 260.

<sup>22</sup> For the application of the scale of levels of belief devised by Ray B. Browne, see K.S. Goldstein, "The Collecting of Superstitious Beliefs", Keystone Folklore Quarterly 9 (1964), pp. 13-22.

<sup>23</sup> In "The Analysis of Folk Belief . . ." Otto Blehr suggests that differentiation be made between "stories" and "legends" on the basis of belief. He states "Legends . . . belong to the past" and "are told primarily for their entertainment value", p. 261.

### Individual Performances

When individuals were interviewed directly, there was a definite attempt to convince the researcher of the past existence of sorcery by stressing the truth of the statements. Declarations were used, such as: "I really remember my father telling me about that,"<sup>24</sup> and "I saw that with my bloody eyes!"<sup>25</sup> The understood integrity of older relatives was cited as verification in several stories. For example, Marie Deveaux stressed the reliability of her story of her grandfather's experience with the tin-smith sorcerer: ". . . and that's true. Because Grandpa wouldn't [lie] . . . And Grandma! She wouldn't say it [unless it was true]."<sup>26</sup>

Ulysses LeLièvre supported his recollection of Eddy Chiasson's "possession" by giving his age and the weather of the remembered time: "On a hot day like today . . . and hay making time. I remember that very well. I was not more than fifteen years of age."<sup>27</sup>

Denise Deveaux attempted to erase possible doubts about the validity of the stories of sorcery by referring

<sup>24</sup> Denise Deveaux, concerning her uncle's sore throat caused by sorcery. 1144.

<sup>25</sup> Ulysses LeLièvre, concerning the behaviour of the "possession" of Eddy Chiasson. 1146.

<sup>26</sup> 1166.

<sup>27</sup> 1146.

to tangible evidence such as a sick cow or soured milk:

"Sometimes they may have been imagining things. But I guess not-- the cows and everything. They could see with their eyes."<sup>28</sup>

The comments used reflect the awareness by the narrator of the possibility of disbelief on the part of the listener. Various verbal devices such as: memorates or eye-witness accounts, reports of tangible evidence directly related to sorcery, and references to the involvement of respected family members were used to dispel doubts. For each of these persons, the devices appeared to act as a declaration of personal commitment to the truth of their words.

#### Narratives as "Stories" and "Legends"

Although most of the narratives concerning sorcery beliefs were in a fragmented state, there were two contributions which could be called "stories" according to Rayfield's definition. These narratives had a beginning, a plot and resolution, and conclusion, with a traditionally acceptable number of extraneous motifs.<sup>29</sup> Moreover, they were recited uninterrupted and appeared to give the teller an opportunity to relive a past situation in all its detail.

With his six-year old grandson as his only comprehending audience, Arthur Bourgeois told his story in Acadian dialect. He seemed to retreat into the past,

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<sup>28</sup> 1166.

<sup>29</sup> J.R. Rayfield, "What is a Story?", American Anthropologist, 74 (1972), pp. 1085-1106.

looking out the window into the distance as he gestured dramatically. During the telling, he appeared to ignore the presence of the collector. Afterward, he neither explained the story, nor stressed the truth of his words.

The story, summarily translated by Denise Deveau, depicted a series of strange incidents which included foot-steps heard in the house, the attacking of a young girl by three sorcerers, the attempts of her parents to remove the spell by beating her, and the possibility of a sexual relationship between the sorcier and the young girl. The presence of a black dog near a certain man identified him as the sorcier who had been causing all the trouble for the family. The sorcerer was threatened with death and the family was no longer affected by the sorcery.<sup>30</sup>

In the other story-telling situation, Marie Deveau addressed her interviewer as if to a grandchild: "I'm going to tell you a story."<sup>31</sup> After pointing to pictures of the people involved, she launched into a narrative.<sup>32</sup> This story involved the strange actions of a cow which belonged to the father-in-law of the teller. The damage was believed to have been done by sorcery. The owner was prompted to kill the cow, but each time he tried to do so,

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<sup>30</sup> 1145.

<sup>31</sup> 1166.

<sup>32</sup> Given in Appendix A and already referred to in other chapters.

the cow began to behave normally as if there was nothing wrong. On the advice of George LeBrun, some pins were put in a bottle with the cow's urine, and the bottle was firmly stoppered under a roof beam. Later the sorcier, a tinker, came to the house asking to be given something to relieve his great pain. He was given baking soda and the next day the cow was well again.<sup>33</sup>

Marie Deveau's dramatization of the roles played by the various participants in the story, and her emotional reaction displayed by her gestures, served to stress her commitment to the truth of the sorcery belief. Her assurance at the end of the story that her grandparents wouldn't lie was a formal device with the same purpose.

Another shorter version of Marie Deveau's story is found in Chiasson's Chéticamp.<sup>34</sup> Interestingly, it was not given to Chiasson by Mrs. Deveau.<sup>35</sup> The existence of variants of the story speaks for the vitality of the narratives<sup>36</sup> and by extension, for the vitality of the belief. The evidence that this story had been passed from person to person, producing variants, qualifies it as a "legend" according to Brunvand, as opposed to Arthur

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<sup>33</sup> 1166.

<sup>34</sup> Chéticamp, pp. 260-261.

<sup>35</sup> Conversation, November 1979.

<sup>36</sup> Herbert Halpert, "Definition and Variation in Folk Legend", American Folk Legend: A Symposium, ed. W.D. Hand (Berkeley: Univ of California Press, 1971), p. 49.

Bourgeois' story which may be "just a personal narrative".<sup>37</sup>

Variation is found to a greater extent in the "legend" of the man who shot (or stabbed) the snowman in order to kill the sorcerer.<sup>38</sup> The existence of this story in Chiasson's publication<sup>39</sup> has not resulted in the elimination of variants in the community's oral tradition. Herbert Halpert has suggested that a legend may become standardized upon being printed.<sup>40</sup> However, it was observed by the author that many of the Chéticamp Acadians were not able to read French, and therefore had not read Chiasson's version of the story.

#### Emotional Content

The tone of voice, the dramatization of roles, and body gestures by the narrators projected the emotions felt about what they said, and depicted involvement with the text. Marie Deveaux, in speaking of the women's fear of the sorcier Gabriel, vented her anger that his actions were tolerated in cases where the men were away from home:

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<sup>37</sup> Jan Brunvand, The Study of American Folklore, 2nd. ed. (New York: Norton, 1978), p. 108.

<sup>38</sup> Given in chapter "The 'Sorcerie'."

<sup>39</sup> Chéticamp, p. 259.

<sup>40</sup> "Definition and Variation", p. 49.



"Oh me, it's something! It used to make me mad. He was going in some houses and he was making the women give him meat."<sup>41</sup>

In some accounts there was evidence of bravado by the narrators which seemed to hide their own fear. Marie Deveau, in reference to the sorcier Gabriel, declared in a voice shaking with emotion:

When he knew that somebody weren't scared-- he was feeling cheap, I'm telling you. And I would have scald him, if he had insist on-- I always had two big kettles of water then-- that we didn't have-- I would have scald him. I go right inside his pants. Yes, I would have done it. Gosh! He would have lose his-- his dickie!<sup>42</sup>

Then she laughed heartily at her idea.

Implied bravado seemed also to be identified in the stories about kicking or turning a stick in the feu-follet. The men would begin the transmission of these stories with their personal experience narratives,<sup>43</sup> telling how they had punished the "Jersais" sorçiers, rather than admitting their fear. But, as Henrietta Aucoin stated, one man was too afraid to go home when followed by the -

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<sup>41</sup> 1166.

<sup>42</sup> 1166.

<sup>43</sup> Called a proto-memorate by L. Dégh and A. Vázsonyi, this sort of narrative can precede or provide background for a legend. Dégh and Vázsonyi, "The Memorates and the Proto-memorates", Journal of American Folklore, 87:345 (1974), pp. 225-239.

"pot of fire".<sup>44</sup> It is possible that the men, as hard-working protectors of their families, found it socially unacceptable to express their fears of the "sorcerie", especially to their peers.

Other attitudes were implicit in the content or context of the narratives. In one story, there were definite signs of jealousy over community popularity based on the veterinary skills of two possible rivals.<sup>45</sup> In another instance, the interviewer was denied the full details of a story because of secretiveness or embarrassment on the part of the informant toward a particular incident. This occurred in the family discussion of the sorcier's powers in which Minnie Aucoin stated: "... sorcier can turn you into a cat or rat or anything ... That's what they do to ... [continued in Acadian dialect in low tones]".<sup>46</sup> The apparent sensitivity of the subject warned the interviewer not to pursue the matter. The same elements were evident in Marie Deveau's depiction of the killing of a woman sorcerer by her husband who, in turn, had been her victim. In this case, Mrs. Deveau seemed inclined to omit the information that the man had actually killed his wife,

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<sup>44</sup> 1146.

<sup>45</sup> 1145.

<sup>46</sup> 239.

until it was evident that the interviewer already knew the details of the incident.<sup>47</sup> They are found again in the narrative in which there was an angry denial of sorcery by a woman who later stated that a sorcier caused his child to be deaf.<sup>48</sup>

The expression of humour within the narrative contributed to the distinction between what was considered true and what was not. This attitude was displayed by J.J. Deveau when the magical transportation of sorcerers was being discussed. After telling a serious narrative about a man who went to Margaree with a sorcier by sitting on a piece of firewood,<sup>49</sup> Deveau went on to tell an obviously comic episode about a magical ride on a pig. In this account, the Jersey sorcier was attempting to go to the Channel Islands. However, the Acadian man accompanying him was so amazed at the jumping ability of the pig, that his exclamation disrupted the magic spell:

... it was like that. He say he went on a big pig! Just sit on the pig [laughter]. And he say the first jump from Chéticamp to St. Joseph du Moine [laughter]. "What a goddamn jump for a pig!" [laughter]. He just stop on the road. He say they're not supposed to talk when they do.

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<sup>47</sup> 1166. Given in chapter, "The 'Sorcerie'", p. 127.

<sup>48</sup> Conversation, June 1978. The informant does not wish to be named.

<sup>49</sup> 1144.

that. . He was so surprised when he jumped a big jump like that. "What a goddamn jump for a pig!" [comment incoherent in laughter]. I don't know if that is true, but he just say that.<sup>50</sup>

It seemed clear from the laughter and the gesticulations involved in the telling, that magical transportation on a pig was a ridiculous idea. On the other hand, transportation on a piece of firewood, or on a fairy horse,<sup>51</sup> were apparently believable happenings.

After the laughter of his family had died down, J.J. Deveaux added to his doubt that the story was true: "I never see that myself, just hear that from old people. They tell lots of stories."<sup>52</sup> In the other version of the same story, given by Henrietta Aucoin,<sup>53</sup> a cautiousness was also expressed by the teller: "Well, it's not my . . . story . . . I was a kid that time that . . ."<sup>54</sup> The humour of the incident, added to the discretion of the tellers, and the fact that the protagonist was not named or known, allows a comparison of belief on the basis of style and content. "Humorous incredulity", one of the

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<sup>50</sup> 1144.

<sup>51</sup> 1146, 1144, discussed in chapter, "The 'Sorcerie'", pp. 97-98.

<sup>52</sup> 1144.

<sup>53</sup> 1146, given in chapter, "The 'Sorcerie'", p. 99.

<sup>54</sup> 1146.

levels of superstitious belief suggested by K.S. Goldstein<sup>55</sup> may be applicable in this instance, but its application must be narrowed to one minor aspect of a larger belief: magical transportation on a pig was not acceptable, but the acceptance of sorcery, or even of sorciers' magical transportation was not in dispute.

#### Behaviour and Belief

The observations of A.J. Bachrach in "An Experimental Approach to Superstitious Behavior"<sup>56</sup> are useful in assessing the impact of the sorcery narratives upon the people of Chéticamp. In his study of observable responses to belief, Bachrach noted that superstitious belief is most reliably manifested through action which is the result of anxiety produced by the belief. Because the belief is communicated through the narrative, it is therefore the narrative which instigates action resulting from the belief.

In Chéticamp, distance in time from the believed practise of sorcery appeared to be the major factor affecting action as the result of narratives. Descriptions of storytelling sessions which took place during the childhood of informants who are now forty or more years of

<sup>55</sup> "The Collecting of Superstitious Beliefs", p. 17.

<sup>56</sup> Arthur J. Bachrach, "An Experimental Approach to Superstitious Behavior", Journal of American Folklore, 75:295 (1962), pp. 1-9.

age reveal that the narratives of the past prompted certain rituals designed to provide protection from sorcery. Packets containing sulphur and a snail were pinned to children's clothing,<sup>57</sup> a coin was placed on butter churns,<sup>58</sup> and Holy Water was sprinkled on buildings and animals,<sup>59</sup> all in order to ward off spells. Non-ritualistic actions were known as well: children hid, shivering with fear, under their bed covers when they heard the stories of their elders,<sup>60</sup> and adults generally hesitated to be outside, alone, at night.<sup>61</sup>

In the present day context there was no evidence that the narratives resulted in action. Although Holy Water is taken from the Church at Easter, no one stated that it is now used as protection against sorcery.

Nonetheless, lack of observable action does not completely discard the possibility of the belief that sorcery might be practised today. Joseph A. Deveau suggested that "sorcerie" is now being practised in the

<sup>57</sup> 1146.

<sup>58</sup> 1146.

<sup>59</sup> 1146.

<sup>60</sup> 1146. Also Denise Deveau, conversation, February 1980.

<sup>61</sup> Father Charles Aucoin, conversation, June 1978.

town of New Waterford at Bingo games.<sup>62</sup> However, in contemplating the possibility that people would practise sorcery now, Denise Deveau ventured that "... people would be smarter than that. They'll get rid of them [the sorciers]. They might kill them, I don't know."<sup>63</sup>

### Summary

The performance of narratives in Chéticamp "offers evidence and supports the belief"<sup>64</sup> that sorcery has been practised in that community.

The stylistic devices used to convey the narrators' trustworthiness were seen to depend upon the context of his or her performance. In group narrative sessions, the common awareness necessary for the formation of community legends<sup>65</sup> was evidenced by the seeking of verbal support, the challenging of statements, the introduction of variants through interruptions, and the use of comments to provide confirmation. These mechanisms acted indirectly to assert the truth of the speakers. In

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<sup>62</sup> 1179.

<sup>63</sup> 1144.

<sup>64</sup> Patrick Mullen, "The Relationship between Legend and Folk Belief", Journal of American Folklore, 84:334 (1971), p. 403.

<sup>65</sup> Linda Dégh and Andrew Vázsonyi, "Legend and Belief", Genre, I: IV (1971), p. 288.

"one-to-one" interviewing situations, more direct methods of establishing credibility were used. Memorates about sorcery recreated the social context of the belief, telling "... who had the experience and in what circumstance (time, place, situation and so on), how it was interpreted and how it influenced behavior".<sup>66</sup> Other accounts relied upon the integrity of known and respected persons, usually relatives, to assert that truth was being told. Here may be applied Blehr's postulation that there cannot be "more than two links between the protagonist and the recipient of a folk belief story".<sup>67</sup> In other words, the storyteller may verify his statements "either by himself vouching for the protagonist, or by telling his audience that the person from whom he heard the story vouched for him".<sup>68</sup>

From the references to past behaviour and the observation of present behaviour resulting from the narratives, it seems evident that the people who exhibited the greatest belief in sorcery were those who lived during the time it was practised. The least emotional involvement and belief was held by young people of today, age seven

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<sup>66</sup> Lauri Honko, "Memorates and the Study of Folk Belief", Journal of the Folklore Institute, 1:1-2 (1964), p. 11.

<sup>67</sup> Blehr, "The Analysis of Folk Belief Stories", p. 260.

<sup>68</sup> Blehr, p. 260.



to sixteen, who were significantly removed from the context of the practise of sorcery. They, as audience to the stories of their elders, found the narratives to have mainly entertainment value.

The connection between the entertainment value, the emotional involvement, and the fabulation or expansion of the text was studied by Margaret Verble in an effort to compare levels of belief in a group of written legend texts collected in the United States.<sup>69</sup> She found that where the teller's ego-involvement or entertainment value was high, then fabulation was great, but emotional involvement was low. Conversely, where there was little fabulation and concern for entertainment, the element of belief was strong. In the author's observations of the content, context, and style of the narratives about sorcery in Chéticamp, little relationship was seen between the expansion of the story, the emotional involvement and the entertainment value insofar as Verble's conclusions were concerned. In both short and long narratives there was emotional involvement, and a definite element of entertainment. However, there were other implications of attitudes toward the truth of the narratives. For instance, humour such as that found in the story about the magical ride on the pig, was probably a device to indicate that

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<sup>69</sup> Margaret Varble, "Emotional Distance in the Narration of Legends", Journal of American Folklore, 88:349 (1975), pp. 296-299.

the narrative was not to be taken seriously. Other stories which expressed caution about the truth of the text, revealed not doubt, but delicacy toward sensitive material especially where death was the result of sorcery.

As Goldstein points out in "The Collecting of Superstitious Belief", designating the levels of belief cannot be totally accurate because of the complexity of human nature and the necessity of subjectivity on the part of the collector.<sup>70</sup> However, it may be said that ". . . the belief itself . . . made its presence felt"<sup>71</sup> in the performances of the abundant narratives about sorcery in Chéticamp.

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<sup>70</sup>Goldstein, p. 19. Also, Dégh and Vázsonyi have discussed at length the difficulties of such conclusions in "Legend and Belief", pp. 281-304.

<sup>71</sup>Dégh and Vázsonyi, "Legend and Belief", p. 301.

In this study, an understanding of sorcery beliefs in Chéticamp has been developed through an examination of local oral traditions. Oral tradition provides the essential connecting link between information about the "sorcerie" and the historical values of the community.

The Acadians' cultural history began with Le Grand Dérangement -- the Expulsion of 1755. Those who came from Acadie to settle in Chéticamp retained the characteristic features of Acadian life: the importance of farming, the stress on hard work and family ties, and the maintenance of the French language and Catholic religion. During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in the community of Chéticamp, much concern was focused upon certain individuals or groups who were seen to deviate from the normative values of the community. These persons were "outsiders" and were often accused of practising sorcery. In an ethnographic community study, James Faris defines an "outsider" as one who transgresses the moral order and violates "rules", attitudes and values held by the community.<sup>1</sup> More specific factors separating individuals from the majority are named by Ronald Frankenburg:

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<sup>1</sup>James Faris, Cat Harbour: A Newfoundland Fishing Community, Newfoundland Social and Economic Studies, No. 3 (St. John's: Memorial University of Newfoundland, 1972), p. 101.

lack of kinship ties, and differences in means of livelihood, language and religion.<sup>2</sup> One or more of these categories is applicable to the people who were accused of practising sorcery in Chéticamp. Some, such as le Canadien and others from Cap Rouge and the Magdalen Islands, were "outsiders" in the sense of being "strangers". Other outsiders, such as the Jersey men, lived in the community but were not Acadian. Of particular interest was Gabriel à Goduc Deveaux, who was Acadian, Catholic and a native of Chéticamp. However, all of them "embodied characteristics of which the community disapproved".<sup>3</sup> Gabriel, a seller of baskets, " . . . didn't do farming, fishing or lumbering like everyone else . . . Bum, like, in a way".<sup>4</sup> He was disliked for being a shiftless character and for failing to provide properly for his family. Le Canadien, the wandering pot-mender, was "different" in his way of life and his apparent lack of family ties. He was mysterious and feared. The Jersey men were socially aloof, Anglican, and spoke English and they were also the merchants who controlled the economy of

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<sup>2</sup> Ronald Frankenburg, Village on the Border (London: Cohen and West, 1957), p. 44.

<sup>3</sup> Philip Mayer, "Witches", Witchcraft and Sorcery, ed. Max Marwick (Harmondsworth, Middlesex; Penguin, 1970), p. 60.

<sup>4</sup> Joseph A. Deveaux, 1179.

of Chéticamp. Through their system of barter they managed to keep the Acadian families indebted to them year after year. While farming had an emotional priority with the Acadians, the "Jersais" were mainly associated with the fishing industry. It was through accusations of sorcery that the Chéticantins defined their feelings toward those who did not conform to the Chéticamp Acadian way of life.

Although the actions or characteristics of these individuals incurred disapproval, the sorciers were tolerated by the community for various reasons. Le Canadien offered a necessary pot-mending service to the community; the "Jersais" controlled the only means by which the Acadians could market their fish and get consumer goods; in the case of Gabriel à Goduc, it appeared that the Chéticantins' sense of community prevented the total rejection of this improvident beggar. Mary Douglas has pointed out that "problems of role definition" leading to ambiguous social relations form a rich soil for sorcery beliefs.<sup>5</sup> In Chéticamp, there was an ambivalent relationship between the community and those accused of sorcery; this was evidenced by the mixture of dislike and tolerance held for the sorciers. Philip Mayer also discusses

<sup>5</sup> Mary Douglas, "Introduction: Thirty Years After Witchcraft, Oracles and Magic", Witchcraft: Confessions and Accusations, ed. Mary Douglas (London: Travistock, 1970), p. xxiv-xxv.

situations of ill-defined relationships in which accusations of witchcraft took place as a result of hostilities which could not be otherwise expressed or acted upon.<sup>6</sup> Similarly, in the interests of economy or community, the Chéticantins did not act directly upon their hostilities toward the "outsiders" in their midst. In fact, rather than facing physical rejection by the community, those accused of sorcery actually benefited both materially and socially by the belief of the people.

It will be noted that the years when sorcery was practised coincided with a period of cultural disruption in Chéticamp's history. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries changes took place in the community which affected its lifeways and values. There was a decline in farming: beginning about 1870, more and more Chéticamp men turned completely to fishing, abandoning the earlier pattern of maintaining a farm as well. A general out-migration served to decrease the population of the community and cause the once traditionally united Acadian family to be spread into urban areas of Canada and the United States. The out-migration and a new interest in education allowed the Acadians of Chéticamp to experience other ways of life; some who went away failed to retain

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<sup>6</sup>Philip Mayer, "Witches", Witchcraft and Sorcery, pp. 55-56.

their Catholicism and returned with new religious beliefs. Also, the Acadians' interest in education introduced the English language to their children through the school system.

As a result, in many Acadian communities in the Maritime provinces, Acadian cultural integrity embodied in the Acadian language and religion seem to be endangered. The concern of elite Acadians about this situation resulted in the formation of La Société L'Assomption which was intended to safeguard the traditional values of the Acadians. However, due to the isolation and comparatively insignificant population of Chéticamp, the Société failed to reach the majority of ordinary Chéticantins. Instead, the people of Chéticamp appear to have sought less formal means of conserving the values of their culture and community. Anxiety generated by the threat to their language, religion and agrarian way of life caused the Acadians to revitalise their traditional belief in the practice of sorcery.<sup>7</sup> The belief in sorcery served to control a threatening situation and to act as a conserving

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<sup>7</sup> Raymond R. Willoughby, "Magic and Cognate Phenomena: An Hypothesis", Handbook of Social Psychology, ed. Carl Murchison (Worcester, Massachusetts: Clark University Press, 1935), pp. 461-519, discusses the social effects of anxiety and cites superstitious beliefs such as those related to sorcery as possible anxiety controls in a cohesive community.

force in community life.<sup>8</sup>

As Mary Douglas has suggested, the sorcery beliefs often "had a normative effect on behavior by producing fear that certain standards [were] adhered to".<sup>9</sup> In Chéticamp, persons who were transgressors were spared chastisement but were warned through the existence of persons accused of sorcery. Amongst the Chéticantins, where the way of life led to intimacy, and open criticism of relatives or neighbours was not acceptable, the accusations of sorcery functioned as a form of social control. "By graphically summing up all forms of deviance", states Marwick, such accusations "threw into sharper relief the positive moral precepts of the society."<sup>10</sup> For example, any Chéticantin who disregarded his family or community responsibilities was likely to be warned of his duties by accusation of sorcery directed at persons or groups who represented the antithesis of these ideals. Furthermore, the type of sorcery inflicted appeared at

<sup>8</sup> Max Marwick, Sorcery in its Social Setting (Manchester University Press, 1965), p. 221, states that "Sorcery and witchcraft emerge as conservative forces . . . brought into sharp relief when they operate under conditions of social change". As well, Douglas, "Thirty Years After . . .", p. xviii, noted that in some societies there is a need for sorcery or witchcraft which serve as a "morality-sustaining normative".

<sup>9</sup> Mary Douglas, "Thirty Years After . . .", p. xvii.

<sup>10</sup> Marwick, "Introduction", Witchcraft and Sorcery, p. 17.



times to expose lack of ideal behaviour on the part of the victim of sorcery.<sup>11</sup> For example, one case might be an instance in which a man did not properly tend his farm. This situation was pointed out by the sorcery of Gabriel which caused an animal to be ill, or milk to turn sour. Also, several accounts allege that Gabriel directed his sorcery at families who refused to give him food; in this way he revealed that there was not enough provision in the home to warrant hospitality, another failure of the man of the house. Moreover, a man who did not show courage when dealing with a Jersey merchant, was frightened by the feu-follet attributed to the Jerseymen.

Marwick observed: "[the sorcerers] also play positive moral roles in being the points of retrospection for feelings of guilt resulting from acts that a believed victim may have committed".<sup>12</sup> When illness or other misfortune resulted from a Chéticantin's failure to care for his farm or family, blame for his weakness was transferred to the evil intent of the sorcier. In this way, the sorcier became a scapegoat for his victim.

Despite the negative aspects of sorcery, found especially in its apparent results, such beliefs had a positive functional value in Chéticamp. On an individual

<sup>11</sup> Marwick, Witchcraft and Sorcery, p. 17.

<sup>12</sup> Marwick, Witchcraft and Sorcery, p. 17.

level, the sorcery beliefs functioned to give certain persons or groups prestige in the community, while at the same time enabling other community members to express their aggressions toward these people. On the community level, the sorcery was an agent of social control in a situation where community values appeared to be in jeopardy.

In retrospect, the use of sorcery as a means of social control appears to have been effective. Despite many changes in the community life of Chéticamp, many parts of the traditional culture have remained vigorous. The Catholic religion and the French language still flourish; Chéticamp continues to be known for its large families and hard working people; and family and community ties persist in Chéticamp and in the closely-knit Acadian communities spread around North America. The decline in farming was the only change which was sustained: in this regard, it is significant that farming was the area most frequently affected by sorcery. However, the decline in farming and the resultant almost total reliance upon fishing did not result in continued subserviance to the Jersey merchants. In the late 1930s, the Co-operative Movement began in Chéticamp, and this economic reform enabled the Acadians to gain greater control of the fishery. In this new situation, the Chéticantins were able to maintain their economic ideals with regard to providing for their families

and to family unity. Notably, it appears that the events of this period marked the end of the practice of sorcery in Chéticamp.

The contemporary accounts of the Chéticamp "sorcerie" ensure that these events will remain vivid in folk memory, and they support the continuing strength of the values and ideals of the Acadians of Chéticamp. As Américo Paredes observed, "Legends . . . are important in providing symbols that embody the social aspirations of the group."<sup>13</sup> Expressing the traditional characteristics and values of the Chéticamp people, the stories about sorcery enforce these aspirations through aspects of the narrative performance such as emotion and the stress on truth. For many Chéticantins the stories about sorcery continue to have a powerful meaning in their everyday lives.

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<sup>13</sup> Américo Paredes, "Mexican Legendry and the Rise of the Mestizo: A Survey", American Folk Legend: A Symposium, ed. W. Hand (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971), p. 98.

The following is a transcription of a "story" provided by Marie Deveau:

Now, my father-in-law-- I don't know if you would understand me well but-- he wasn't scared of the sorcier. And there was an old man. He was coming from-- Québec or the Madeleine Islands-- but he was old. He was a tin-smith. He was going around in the houses. If they had pots to mend-- pots and like-- tea kettles. And he came with a-- and he was mending it with a-- copper and you know-- what they have to solder. Soldering, with solder. And he was fixing all-- he would go in the house and he would say, "Have you got anything to-- solder, anything you want me to mend?" So-- so, mostly, not in every house, but you know, he used to be doing-- He was just charging a little. And then his board. And he was getting-- and they said he was a sorcier, and he was, too. And my father-in-law, he was kind of . "Huh!" he said, "You sorciers!" He said, "I'm not scared of you at all," he said. "You can't throw your "sorcerie" on me." And he [the sorcier] said, "Maybe not you because you're too-- you're too quick, you're too bad-tempered." "But," he said, "I can do it on one of your cow." He [Mrs. Deveau's father-in-law] said, "If you do it on one of my cow-- " He [the sorcier] said, "I can put my "sorcerie" in-- in its footsteps." Grandpa never thought about anything-- about that man, that fellow. And he was making some ship sails. Grandpa was sewing some sails. He had them in the house. And in the evening when he would get home from the mountain where-- he used to work on the sails. Before that, two or three days before, he went to the barn, and there was a cow. She didn't want to eat. She didn't drink. With her two eyes out of her head. And then Grandma was going to milk her. Wouldn't give milk-- and oh! She wouldn't stand still, and it was getting worse. You know, she was lying down. She was putting her feet up and that's true, that's true! Grandma said it too. So, he said, "I wonder what's the matter with the cow." Sometimes she was so bad that he would come home to get the axe to kill her. But when he'd get in the barn, she was eating, and-- not-- like as if she had never been sick. Grandpa said, "Might be some sorciers." So he went down at the-- There was a LeBrun, George LeBrun down there. And he knew how to-- what to do for the "sorceleur" [sic]. So he said-- he was selling-- something like just little knick-knacks-- needles and scissors and things like that. He said, "Buy a

package of needles, you need them." He said, "Go home and get some urine from the cow. Put it in the bottle and put the needles in the bottle. And then cork it tight, and put it underneath something that it--" You know-- that it can't come off. Like put something heavy on the cork so that it won't bust, you know. So, he went back home, and he did that. And they were saying when you were doing things like that, you wouldn't say anything about it. Just-- and not say anything about it. And they said the sorciers will come-- for something, and if you don't give it to him, the cow was to die. And if you don't give him what he wants-- He was working at the sails every evening and he had done that. (First he went to the barn, but the cow wouldn't let out any urine. When he was-- sometimes she was-- after he was in the house, you know. He went there but he couldn't save any. So, he said, "I thought to myself, I'm goin to stay there. If I stay here two days, I'm goin to get some!" He said the cow was tramping, was tramping. She wanted to do it but she wasn't doing it. She was tramping and tramping and tramping. And then-- she used to lift, bit by bit, she used to lift. He said to himself, "Later on she have to let go." And then at last he got some, something in a can. And then he put it in a bottle and took it upstairs. He put it underneath one of those-- then-- They had this house but it was smaller. Under one of the big rafter of the house and put a shingle, like-- to tighten it, and then . . . And he was working at his sails. Grandma was in bed. It was about-- oh, ten or eleven o'clock cause he was working till midnight. And Grandma was sleeping. So, all of a sudden--bang, bang, bang! on the door. It wasn't the real winter but it was cold because the door was shut. He was saying, "Lubin!" His name was Lubin. "Lubin, Lubin, open the door, open the door!" So he opened the door. That man, you know, that man that was-- This is what takes your mind away. Before that, he had gone outside. My grandfather had gone outside. And then, there was a big black dog. I don't know if it was black but-- he said the moon was shining and he said it was a black dog. A big, big dog passed like in-- right by him. But at those times some people aboard ships had dogs sometimes-- It got astray. But he said it wasn't that because he hadn't seen any boat, but he didn't know what it was. And he thought to himself, "I wonder who has that big dog. Must have been some stranger." So he got in-- . A little after it was "bang" on the door. So

Grandpa went to open the door, let the fellow in. "Ah," he said, "Lubin, Lubin, I'm feeling so bad." He said, "I was over at-- the next house there, at the neighbours." And he said, "I was feeling so bad, I was wanting some soda, some baking soda. And they haven't any. Have you any? That you could put in water and give me a drink." Then-- Grandpa didn't know where the soda was. He woke up Grandma and she told him where it was. So, Grandpa made him a drink. "Ah," he said, "Thank you, thank you!" And he took the drink. "Well," he said, "Now I'm going back there, because I was there to sleep, to sleep there and I'm going back to sleep there." So, he went over there. And a little while after, Grandpa thought of that. He said to Grandma, "I bet you that the cow will be alright tomorrow morning." Okay. So the next morning, he went to the barn. The cow was right well. "Eeh!" he said, "It's a good thing that it takes the mind off you, because I think I would have killed him." See? Then the next morning, he went to that-- the little store that wasn't very far. And the man where he slept was there. He said, "Did the fellow slept over to your place?" He said, "Never saw him." See? And that's true. That's a true story. He said, "That fellow was never at our place." When he came back, Grandma said he was so damn mad. He said, "If I had known--!" And then later on, he came. The man came. And Grandpa told him. He said, "Hby, my Giy, [sic] if I had known that-- that it was for that, well you would have-- I would have given you quite a wallops, I'm telling you." See? And that's true. Because Grandpa wouldn't-- and Grandma! She wouldn't say it. And it was the same for another woman.

Index of Motifs

Stith Thompson's Motif-Index of Folk-Literature is used for comparative purposes, thereby establishing the traditionality of folk beliefs found in this thesis.

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## LIST OF INFORMANTS

Aucoin, Alfred. Plateau. Construction worker. age 23.

Aucoin, Freddie. Sydney (born in Chéticamp). Steel mill worker. age ca. 48.

Aucoin, Henrietta. Petit Etang. Housewife. age 48.

Aucoin, Lionel. Toronto (born in Chéticamp). age ca. 40.

Aucoin, Minnie. St. Joseph du Moine. Housewife. age ca. 80.

Aucoin, Mrs. Clôvis. Grand Etang. Housewife. age ca. 50.

Aucoin, Patrick. St. Joseph du Moine. Retired fisherman. age 83.

Aucoin, Rev. Charles. Chéticamp. Director of Les Trois Pignons. age 68.

Boudreau, Dr. Gabriel. Chéticamp. Retired physician. age ca. 69.

Bourgeois, Arthur. La Prairie. Self-taught veterinarian. age 66.

Bourinot, Marshall. Arichat, Richmond County. Retired newspaper editor. age ca. 70.

Burns, Mary. Chéticamp. Retired housewife. age ca. 70.

Chiasson, John Joseph (J.J.). Sydney (born in Chéticamp). Retired store keeper. age 96.

Chiasson, Rev. Anselme. Centre d'études acadiennes, Moncton (born in Chéticamp). age ca. 68.

Cormier, Dr. Jean. Point Cross. Retired ophthalmologist. age 69.

Delaney, Joseph. St. Joseph du Moine. School janitor. age ca. 60.

Desjardins, Rev. Chéticamp. Parish priest, St. Peter's Church. age ca. 40.

Deveaux, Denise. Sydney (born in Chéticamp). Housewife. age 42.

Deveaux, Marie. Belle-Marche. Housewife. age 68.

Deveaux, Joseph A. New Waterford (born in Chéticamp).  
Retired miner. age 72.

Deveaux, John Joseph. Sydney (born in Chéticamp).  
Mechanic. age 58.

Doucett, Rev. Dan. Petit-de-Grat, Richmond County.  
Parish priest. age ca. 40.

Gerrior, Rev. Conrad. West Arichat, Richmond County.  
Retired parish priest. age ca. 60.

LeBlanc, Jules. Sydney and Chéticamp. Student. age 23.

LeBoutillier, Bert. Chéticamp. Store keeper. age ca. 40.

LeFort, Raymond, Sydney (born in Chéticamp). Teacher,  
Canadian Coast Guard College. age ca. 30.

LeLièvre, Ulysses. Chéticamp. Carpenter. age ca. 60.

LeVert, Bernie. Sydney (born in Chéticamp). Professor,  
College of Cape Breton. age ca. 40.

LeVert, Francis. Cheticamp. age 94. (Transcription  
provided by Centre d'études acadiennes, collected  
by Jules Chiasson, bob. 1, no. 10, 1974.)

Maugher, Pearl. Cap le Ronde, Richmond County. Journalist.  
age ca. 40.

Maugher, Lennox. Cap le Ronde, Richmond County. Retired  
farmer and fisherman, age ca. 80.

Pleau, Jacques. Chéticamp. Naturalist, Parks Canada.  
age ca. 35.

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